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AUSTRALIA V KUWAIT PREVIEW

FOOTBALL'S FLIRT WITH MUSIC

BATTLE OF THE MAN U 1999 V 2009

Photo: Daniel Flis

VICTORIOUS VICTORY!

EVEN ERNIE CRACKS SMILE AFTER CLINCHING TREBLE

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TOP SHOT!

You Snooze, You Lose: An unsighted Adelaide United 'keeper Eugene Galekovic reacts late to Tommy Pondeljak's 59th minute strike as the ball and the 2009 A-League Championship slips out of The Reds' reach. Victory striker Archie Thompson realises the magnitude of the moment.

Photo: Daniel Flis

MELBOURNE VICTORY

1 - 0

ADELAIDE UNITED

TRIPLE TREAT FOR VICTORY!

Pondeljak Strike Settles Tight Final

The ingredients were all there on Saturday night. The revenge factor, the history making chance on both sides, the goalkeeper showdown, the chance for redemption and a record breaking full house to witness it all.

As the favourite to win the A-League title for the second time and against the same club it had humiliated two years ago Melbourne Victory did not disappoint and etched yet another milestone in the league's history books.

A single strike from former St Albans boy Tom Pondeljak made the difference on a perfect footballing night providing a much more entertaining spectacle than the 6-0 rout handed down by Archie Thompson two years ago.

Red and yellow cards were the difference on the night and while I personally missed the first send-off due to the fact that I had to blagg my way into the stadium after Goal! Weekly was "overlooked", I witnessed Cristiano's lonely walk to the change rooms wondering why match referee Mathew Breeze had decided to ruin such an event. The accidental elbow to Roddy Vargas' drew blood leading to a decision that Breeze will surely regret.

If Adelaide's underdog status wasn't clear enough the Reds played almost the entire game with a numerical disadvantage and much to Melbourne's credit it exploited it well. With Adelaide's match plans thrown on their head, the match turned scrappy and the usual headliners failed to fire much to disappointment of newcomers expecting Thompson put on a show.

The duel between the goalkeepers quickly took centre stage with Victory's main man Michael Theoklitos producing jaw-dropping saves, which Reds' keeper Eugene Galekovic matched at his end. Two years ago Galekovic tasted A-League success with victory but the bitter-sweet taste of losing the top spot against Theoklitos saw him change colours. Since then Galekovic has done well enough to catch the eye of national coach Pim Verbeek but despite his personal triumphs Galekovic is still playing second fiddle to Theoklitos who deserved the Joe Marsten medal for exploits on the night.

Back to the game; desperation started to mount following Pondeljak's nicely placed strike stuck a dagger into Adelaide's hopes 30 minutes from the end. The crowd got what it wanted and now it hungered for more but the final run home was a suffered one. Close calls and another dubious send-off kept the crowd on its toes. Danny Allsopp felt the wrath of Breeze's breezy attitude to red cards after some argy bargy got the better of the number nine but alas the field was level again.

Adelaide came close and credit to Vidmar who didn't hold back and kept pushing with nothing to lose but the Victory defense held firm and rode the victory train all the way to the final whistle.

Vidmar praised his side's will to press on after the send off saying how 'gutted' he was for the players.

"We deserved something more than pride. I certainly thought we had the upper hand, but when you go down to 10 men it changes your game plan and it made it very difficult for the players tonight, but I couldn't be any prouder of the players."

"It was a fantastic effort and they really wore their hearts on their sleeves." Added the proud Vidmar.

On the other hand Victory's man in charge took off his gloves and made plans for a night out with the boys stating "I had my most relaxed day and I'm going to stay longer than 20 minutes at the after-party tonight."

"They pushed us all the way in the league championship. They pushed us all the way tonight. They were tough competitors, but the bottom line is we've had a great year and we've thoroughly enjoyed it, but certainly it was a tough game tonight.

While not even two championships will change some punters' opinion of Merrick the man at the helm of the country's biggest club can take off his shoes for now and savour this moment.

That was it. Melbourne lived up to its name. The fans got a great piece of theatre, and the new Etihad Stadium can keep watching Aussie football's transformation into a giant.

MATCH DETAILS

Melbourne Victory 1 (Tom PONDELJAK 59')
Adelaide United 0
Saturday 28 February
Telstra Dome
Referee. Matthew Breeze
Assistant Referees: Matthew Cream, Dennis Silk
Fourth official: Peter Green
Crowd: 53,273

Melbourne Victory line-up: 1.Michael THEOKLITOS (gk), 2.Kevin MUSCAT (c), 5.Sebastian RYALL, 7.Matthew KEMP, 9.Danny ALLSOPP, 10.Archie THOMPSON, 12.Rodrigo VARGAS, 14.Billy CELESKI, 15.Tom PONDELJAK (8.Grant BREBNER 82'), 16.Carlos HERNANDEZ, 22.Nick WARD ((19.Evan BERGER 55' (17.Jose Luis LOPEZ 88').

Substitutes not used: 11.NEY FABIANO, 20.Mitchell LANGERAK (gk).

Yellow Cards: Tom PONDELJAK 59'.
Red Cards: Danny ALLSOPP 64'.

Adelaide United line-up: 20.Eugene GALEKOVIC (gk), 2.Robert CORNTHWAITE, 7.Lucas PANTELIS (9.Paul AGOSTINO 62'), 10.CRISTIANO, 13.Travis DODD (c.), 14.Scott JAMIESON (6. CASSIO 73'), 15.Jonas SALLEY, 16.Daniel MULLEN, 18.Fabian BARBIERO, 19.Sasa OGNENOVSKI, 24.Paul REID,

Substitutes not used: 27.Michael MARRONE, 28.Rostyn GRIFFITHS, 30.Mark BIRIGHITTI (gk).

Yellow Cards: Sasa OGNENOVSKI 37', Scott JAMIESON 55', Fabian BARBIERO 64', Robert CORNTHWAITE 80', Travis DODD 90'.

Red Cards: CRISTIANO 11'.

The Sweet Smell of Victory: Melbourne players celebrate ater the deadlock was finally broken.
Inset: Adelaide's Christiano trudges off after receiving harsh marching orders from referee Matthew Breeze.

PLAYER RATINGS - MVFC

1. Michael Theoklitos: 7 - Pulled off vintage saves all night to keep Victory in charge and showed great authority at the back.
2. Kevin Muscat: 5 - Kept all the Victory boys in check and managed some decent passing but his lack of speed let him down
5. Sebastian Ryall: 4 - Failed to assert himself on the match and didn't influence much of the play
7. Matthew Kemp: 6 - Had a good game but let himself down in crucial moments
8. Grant Brebner: 2 - Came on and failed to make any sort of impact gets two points for the fact that he didn't make any game changing errors
9. Dannny Allssopp: 5 - Found himself space and got onto through-balls but then let himself down by getting sent-off.
10. Archie Thompson: 4 - Was a shadow of himself on the night. Couldn't find space in the box and spend a lot of the time on the ground.
12. Rodrigo Vargas: 7 - Held on firm in defense and managed to keep his head together after his early bump.
14. Billy Celeski: 6 - Distributed the ball well on occasions but his crosses were largely unthreatening
15. Tom Pondeljak: 7 - Got the winner and deserves praise for a nicely placed shot but was too slow to match it with the younger players.
16. Carlos Hernandez: 6 - Let off a couple of threatening shots but was held in check most of the night.
17. Jose Luis Lopez: 1 - Came on for the last two minutes after Berger fell on his head, which didn't give time to do much.
19. Evan Berger: 4 - Came on and tried hard putting his body on the line for the sake of the team.
22. Nick Ward: 1 - Had a shocking game and was rightly subbed off.

PLAYER RATINGS - AUFC

ADELAIDE UNITED
20 Eugene Galekovic - 7 -Made some timely saves another solid performance
2 Robert Cornthwaite - 8 - Pivotal in the strength of United, consistent good performance
7 Lucas Pantelis - 6 -Yet again down on form, small influence on the game
10 Cristiano - 6 -Time on the pitch promising, a zealous tackle gave him an early shower
13 Travis Dodd - 7-Gave his all as captain, featured everywhere on the park
14 Scott Jamieson - 8 - Sterling effort gave 110% eventually succumbing to his ankle injury
15 Gwaye Jonas Salley - 7 -Strong and aggressive in midfield, stood his ground
16 Daniel Mullen 7 Stood up great display of hard defence, had some great runs
18 Fabian Barbiero 7 -Had his chances but unsuccessful, slightly down on form from last week
19 Sasa Ognenovski 7-Intimidated and held defence solidly as per usual
24 Paul Reid 7 --Another great game in midfield, had his owns chances to score

Subs
9 Paul Agostino (70th) - 6 - Farewell performance could have gone from zero to hero but missed
6 Cassio (72nd) - 7 -Not as effective as he usually is

By Carlos Ibarra

Photos by Daniel Flis

Action between Preston and Melbourne Knights. Cameron watson hits a beauty!

ROUND TWO FIXTURES

Oakleigh Cannons
v
Dandenong Thunder
Jack Edwards Res
Fri 6 Mar KO 8:30PM

Altona Magic
v
Preston Lions
Paisley Park
Sat 7 Mar KO 7:30PM

Sunshine Georgies
v
Hume City
Chaplin Reserve
Sun 8 Mar KO 5:00PM

Melbourne Knights
v
Richmond Eagles
Knights Stadium
Sun 8 Mar KO 5:00PM

South Melbourne
v
Heidelberg Utd
Bob Jane Stadium
Sun 8 Mar KO 6:00PM

Whittlesea Zebras
v
Green Gully
To Be Confirmed
Mon 9 Mar KO8:30PM

ANDREW FISHER'S KISS OF DEATH

ROUND 2 PREVIEW

OAKLEIGH V DANDENONG:
Fri 6th Mar, 8:30pm Jack Edwards Reserve
Oakleigh sent out an early message to its league rivals after demolishing Heidelberg last Friday night. The Cannons will be out to ensure the result was no flash in the pan when they face the Thunder on Friday night. Dandenong will also be out to show their result against South Melbourne was no fluke.
HOME WIN

Last 5 Meetings: Oak 5-2 Dand (2003), Dand 0-2 Oak (2003), Oak 2-4 Dand (2002), Dand 1-1 Oak (2001), Dand 1-0 Oak (1996)

RICHMOND V MELBOURNE KNIGHTS:
Fri 6th Mar, 8:30pm Kevin Bartlett Reserve
Having watched Richmond outplay the Zebra's in round 1, the Eagles have managed to fly under the radar during the off-season and have built a solid line up. They will be looking to test themselves against a new look Knights outfit. The Knights will be looking to continue their impressive record against the Eagles.
HOME WIN

Last 5 Meetings: Knights 3-2 Rich (2008), Rich 2-2 Knights (2008), Rich 0-2 Knights (2007), Rich 1-1 Knights (2006), Knights 2-0 Rich (2006)

ALTONA MAGIC V PRESTON LIONS:
Sat 7th Mar, 7:30pm Paisley Park.
The regaining Champions got off to the best of starts, and will be looking to consolidate with another victory over rivals Preston Lions who are still smarting after throwing away the points against the Knights. Preston will be without suspended Captain Michael Bosevski for this match.
HOME WIN

Last 5 Meetings: Altona 2-1 Prest (2008 Finals), Altona 4-0 Prest (2008), Prest 2-3 Altona (2008), Altona 3-3 Prest (2007), Prest 2-1 Altona (2007)

SUNSHINE V HUME CITY:
~~Sun 8th Mar, 5:00pm Chaplin~~ Reserve
It was just seven years ago that Sunshine played Hume City in a State 2 league match.
They now meet for the first time in the top flight of Victorian Football. Both teams suffered opening day defeats and will be out to pick up their first points of the season in this fixture.
SCORE DRAW.

Last 5 Meetings: Sun 2-0 Hume (2004), Hume 1-1 Sun (2004), Hume 3-3 Sun (2002), Sun 0-1 Hume (2002), DNP.

SOUTH MELBOURNE V HEIDELBERG:
Sun 8th Mar, 6:00pm Bob Jane Stadium
Ironically the last time South Melbourne defeated its bitter rival, a player by the name of Vaughan Coveny was on the score sheet. The 'Horse' has now returned to his old stomping ground with the Bergers in his sights.
Heidelberg has had the edge over the lakeside club in recent times, and will be looking to make amends for a humiliating loss last week.
SCORE DRAW
Last 5 Meetings: South 1-2 Heid (2008), Heid 2-1 South (2008), Heid 3-0 South (2007), South 3-3 Heid (2007), South 3-1 Heid (2006).

WHITTLESEA V GREEN GULLY:
Mon 9th Mar, 8.30pm TBA

Whittlesea looked like a team who couldn't wait for the season to end on Friday night.
Their off-field problems transformed onto to the pitch as they were completely outplayed. On a positive note they do have plenty of time to turn things around, and what better chance then against Green Gully.

Last 5 Meetings: Gully 0-0 Whitt (2008), Whitt 0-1 Gully (2008), Whitt 2-1 Gully (2007 Finals), Gully 1-2 Whit (2007), Whitt 0-2 Gully (2007).

For those who like a flutter on the English betting sites, my outside bet would be Heidelberg upsetting South Melbourne at home. This week's safe bet: Altona to beat Preston. Remember bet responsibly.

By Andrew Fisher
Kiss of Death

TOP SHOTS! errea

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Good luck to all the punters, and remember 'keepers, you have been warned!

HUME CITY 0 - 1 ALTONA MAGIC

ALL GUTS BUT NO GLORY FOR HUME

Magic Opens Defence Of Title With Opportunist Win

Hume City FC out to impress in its first game of the season in front of approximately 800 people against last season's Champions Altona Magic.

Hume took the field missing five of its star players, taking the park without Ross Thomspon, Tansel Baser, Andy Vlahos, Dragi Nastevski and Jonathon Munoz. It was a chance for the youngsters of the team to step up and play against some experienced opposition, and play they did. Not intimidated by the opposition, Hume City created chance after chance only to be denied by the Altona Magic keeper Bojo Jevdejevic. Young striker Ramazan Savran was on fire and created countless chances for his team mates and himself to score, but unfortunately missing three golden chances that would have had the defending champions reeling. Hume City having the majority of the play in the first half went into the half time break 0-0.

The second half continued much in the way the first half finished. Until the 80th minute when Altona Magic was awarded a free kick outside the box. The experienced outfit capatalised on some loose marking in Hume City defence and scored from a set play through a Nick Kalmar header. Going into the last 10 minutes 1-0 up Altona used its experienced heads to keep Hume City FC at bay winning the match and taking 3 points from its first match of the season.

By Ezel Hikmet

Photos by John Punshon

Hume City keeper Lou Acevski makes a brilliant save of Pece Cergovski's point blank shot at goal

Debutantes battle it out ... Hume City's Jason Davidson (left) takes on Kliment Traseski (Altona Magic)

Nick Kalmar (centre) celebrates his goal

RICHMOND EAGLES

3 - 0

WHITTLESEA ZEBRAS

EAGLES SWAMP ZEBRAS

Cardozo and Visevic On Target

Richmond and Whittlesea Zebras commenced their 2009 Victorian Premier League seasons on a hot Friday night at Kevin Bartlett Reserve. Another dry summer provided a pitch which was hard underneath a good cover of spongy grass, condusive to fast flowing football.

Eagles coach Michael Chatzitrifonos fielded a starting eleven containing four club debutants, with the welcome rteurn to the strikeforce of Daniel Visevic another change to a side which reached the Finals last term. His counterpart Ivan Jolic entered his first full season in charge after taking over following the mid-season resignation of Peter Ollerton last time in. At his disposal was a squad with few changes from the one only spared relegation by the withdrawl of the A.I.S. from the competition, most notable being the return of Tex Apostolikas after a year with Oakleigh Cannons.

The home side commenced the game defending the Heyington Bridge end of the ground, and were on the attck after five minutes with Visevic shooting wide from distance after recieving a ball to feet from Richie Cardozo on the right. Three minutes later a free-kick from Cardozo reached Michael Catalano, who's volley back across goal went close to floating into the top corner of the goal.

It was another free-kick from Cardozo after nine minutes which saw Richmond take the lead. From the left flank his ball into the crowded penalty area saw a Zebras headed clearance cannon into the back of a team-mate's head and then fly past the stranded Robbie SImioni for an unfortunate own goal.

Whittlesea were doing themselves few favours by conceding free-kicks in dangerous areas around the box, and two minutes after the goal a free-kick from the same spot saw Cardozo's ball cleared away just ahead of it finding George Goutzioulis.

A throw-in near the corner flag after seventeen minutes saw Richmond double their lead. Lorenz Kindtner found Visevic at the near post, his flicked header finding Cardozo following in behind him to head the ball unchallenged into the net from six yards.

It was one way traffic for the home side, Visevic shooting over the bar from twenty-five yards after cutting in from the left and then Goutzioulis having a header deflected just over the crossbar at a corner-kick. Tensions flared after twenty-three minutes when Visevic objected to some constant fouling with a push, and shortly after Stefan Piorkowski took exception to being body checked by Dimitri Tsiaras.

Marco Santilli forced Peter Zois into a save at the near post after half an hour had passed. The Zebras were pushing forward again five minutes later before a counter-attack which saw Richmond add a third goal. Kindtner found the ball as an attack broke down, carrying it up the middle of pitch from his own half. With Cardozo and Visevic in support against just two defenders, Kindtner slipped the ball to Visevic on his right as he reached the edge of the penalty area, and after a touch the 2006 VPL Under 21 Player of the Year marked his return to the Eagles fold with a goal with a driving finish.

Three mintues later another set-piece from Cardozo threatened the Zebras goal, his twenty-four yard free-kick shot striking the base of the post and bouncing to safety. A great ball from Tsiaras found Visevic a minute later and he slipped the ball past Simioni before it cleared off the line. The half-time break came with the Eagles holding a commanding 3-0 lead.

Half-time substitute Edemer Garcia was in one-on-one with Zois five minutes after the resumption, the new Richmond keeper quickly off his line to pull off a great save. Catalano shot wide from twenty-two yards after a ball from Goutzioulis. The intensity of the first period had disappeared and the goalmouth action became less frequent.

The seventy-ninth minute saw Nick Kalambokis find Visevic, who chipped a ball towards the Cardozo on the penalty spot but Simioni arrived first to clear. Five minutes later Whittlesea were close to getting off the mark when Garcia had a shot blocked on the line by Terry Antoniadis. Cardozo put a free-kick over the bar with five minutes remaining before Hayden D'Agostino let fly from thirty-five yards when latching onto a half-clearance, forcing another good save from Zois. Zois was tested again by Apostolikas from a similar distance in the final minute, comfortably dealing with the effort to maintain a clean sheet and leave the final score at 3-0.

It was another great start to a VPL season by Richmond, a fourth opening round win in as many years. A sterner test of their capabilities will come with games against last season's Grand Finalists over the next two weeks, starting with the visit of Melbourne Knights to Bartlett Reserve on Friday night.

Things will not get any easier for the Zebras, hosting Green Gully on Sunday at a venue yet to be confirmed following a turbulent summer off the pitch which has seen their continued use of Epping Stadium under threat.

Richmond: P.Zois, D.Black, E.Karahan, S.McCluskey, D.Tsiaras, D.Visevic, G.Goutzioulis (N.Kalambokis 67'), R.Cardozo, M.Catalano (N.Govedarica 88'), L.Kindtner (T.Antoniadis 60'), A.Viola

Goals: Own Goal 9' Cardozo 17' Visevic 35'

Yellow Cards: None
Red Cards: None

Whittlesea Zebras: R.Simioni, M.Pistininzi (H.D'Agostino 46'), S.Kovacevic, R.Antoniadis, S.Martin, S.Piorkowski, J.Kozic, G.Lombardo (E.Garcia 46'), M.Kuna, T.Apostolikas, M.Santilli.

Yellow Cards: Santilli 20'
Red Cards: None

Man of the Match: Daniel Visevic (Richmond)
Venue: Kevin Bartlett Reserve
Crowd: 300

The Eagles are flying high after a convincing opening day of the season.
Inset: Double trouble: George Goutzioulis and Daniel Visevic, who helped demolish the Zebras.

By Mark Boric

Photos by Peter Psarros

WINTONS WINNING START

Gully Takes Opening Honours In Derby

David Winton has made a most succesful and impressive coaching debut for the Green Gully Cavaliers, winning the old Maltese Derby against the Sunshine Georgies by three goals to nil, in front of 1000 strong bumper crowd.

The first half was a tame affair, and as new Gully Coach David Winton had expected, the newly promoted Georgies took the game to the Cavaliers, chasing down the ball all over the pitch and not shying away from any physical contests. In fact up until the 20th minute mark of the match, the Georgies did look the more dangerous of the two teams going forward. Gully midfielder and man of the match Andy Vargas later admitted the players were nervous at the beginning of the match, and were weary of their rival opponents. With half an hour played, Gully did manage to piece together some attacking moves, Kristijan Ivesic was a busy boy down the right flank, and eventually a chance fell for Matthew "The Colonel" Sanders, whose half-volley cross the face of goal, narrowly missing the far post.

The Cavaliers lifted the tempo in the second half as the visitors began to fade out. In fact, ex-Gully forward Campbell Banks, now a Georgies player via Hume City (long story), was stretching out the legs, with signs of cramp just prior to the halftime break.

On the hour, Gully defender Mile Medjedovic connected to a speculative Andy Vargas freekick, and tapped the ball past the advancing Martin John in the Sunshine goal. Within 10 minutes, Andy Vargas, evidently inspired by his newly appointed role as co-vie captain with Jeffrey Fleming, pushed Pablo Cardozo and Steven Burton aside when Ivesic was brought down 30 yards from the Georgies goal. Andy made no mistake with the freekick, curling in to the right top corner, as good as any freekick David Beckham has struck, but as yet there is no truth the rumours that Andy Vargas will be signing for AC Milan, however Vargas may still be a chance to release his own line of aftershave.

To cap of the night, Andy Vargas release Kristijan Ivesic down the right flank, Kristijan left burn marks on the pitch as he dashed into the Georgies penalty area and blasted the ball into the same top corner Vargas had found with his freekick.

Joel Nikolic was unlucky to put wide a chance setup by Kristijan Ivesic, as was substitute Aziz Behich with a looping strike on goal just over the bar in the final 10 minutes of the match.

So with a new season, new coach, new players, new look Gully team, the signs are promising.

Votes:
3 Andy Vargas
2 Kristijan Ivesic
1 Mile Medjedovic

Crowd: 1000

Green Gully:
#23 Steven Tilovski, #2 Kristijan Ivesic, #3 Steven Burton, #4 Dean Fak, #7 Jeffrey Fleming, #10 John Adam, #11 Pablo Cardozo, #12 Matthew Sanders, #16 Mile Medjedovic, #17 Andy Vargas, #18 Joel Nikolic
Subs:
#00 Patric Ndongo, #6 Kole Delev, #8 Aziz Behich, #9 Daniel White, #14 Ryan Ollerton

Sunshine Georgies:
#1 Martin John, #5 Christos Konstas, #10 George Papadopoulos, #12 Craig Sweeney, #4 Wayne Wallace, #9 John Barros, #7 Matthew Cini, #15 Neal Hooks, #6 Thomas Johnstone, #14 Campbell Banks
Subs:
#25 Antoni Pecora, #16 Ryan Filipovic, #13 John Sapasovski, #11 Peter Koutsoupias, #17 Steven Manceski

By Markian Jaworsky
Photos by Daniel Flis

PRESTON LIONS 1 - 2 MELBOURNE KNIGHTS

ELEMENTARY MY DEAR WATSON!

Knights Snatch Win From Lions' Jaws

Cameron Watson broke the hearts of the Preston Lions, as he scored two late goals to steal all the points from a gallant Lions outfit at BT Connor Reserve on Sunday.

Both Preston Lions and the Melbourne Knights have had major squad changes during the off-season and fielded plenty of new faces.

Former St Albans Saint's duo Damir Salcin and Ivan Filipovic made their debuts for the Lions and Serkan Oksuz also returned back to the club, while for the Knights no less then five players made debuts. Defender John Fitzgerald (Galway United, Ireland), Josh Groenewald (Heidelberg), Greg Draper (Wellington Phoenix), Dimi Hatzimouratis (Western Suburbs) and Frankie Lagana (Oakleigh Cannons) all starting the match.

It was the Knights who started the stronger with Alex Kiratzoglou and Frankie Lagana seeing early efforts go wide. However it didn't take long for some of the familiar Preston veterans to start clicking. Blaze Georgioski setting up Robert Dolevski who saw his chip successfully beat Ozdemir in the Knights goal, but agonizingly bounce back of the crossbar.

Minutes later Georgioski saw his close range effort flash just wide after some good work from Captain Michael Bosevski set up the chance.

The new Knights strike duo of Draper and Groenewald combined well, with Draper setting up Groenewald for a goal only for the assistant referee to rule out the goal.

That was as good as it got in the first half, as both teams failed to truly test the opposition goalkeeper.

Early in the second half Draper wasted a golden opportunity from fifteen yards out, blazing over the bar after a good run from Hatzimouratis set up the chance.

At the other end Serkan Oksuz was having a nightmare, having been kept quiet by the Knights defence for much of the game, the striker had two opportunities within a minute, but was let down by poor first touches which summed up his night.

The game looked like it was heading for a dull goalless draw, when it suddenly burst to life in the last fifteen minutes. An inconspicuous long from was not dealt by the Knights defence and allowed Blaze Georgioski to calmly chip the ball over a stranded Ozdemir and give the Lions a 75th minute lead.

Mate Dugandzic who returned from Croatian champions Dinamo Zagreb, and youngster Tedros Yabio was thrown on to give the Knights that extra flair upfront. It worked a treat as the duo created major headaches for the Preston backline, who conceded a dangerous free on the edge of the box in the 85th minute. Up stepped Cameron Watson who expertly placed his shot over the wall and into the top corner.

The drama didn't end there however, as Preston captain Michael Bosevski was given a straight red card in injury time for a dangerous tackle. It only for worse for the Lions, as a blunder between goalkeeper and defender in the 94th minute allowed Cameron Watson to slot the ball into an empty net and snatch all three points.

The loss was harsh on Preston, as a draw would have been the more fair result. Next week Preston faces Altona Magic on Saturday night at Paisley Reserve, whilst the Knights take on Richmond at Kevin Bartlett Reserve on Friday night.

PRESTON LIONS: Salcin, Bosevski, Dolevski (Arsovski 76'), Najdovski, Filipovic, Micovski (Ladnjak 66'), Georgioski, Miskas, Popovic, Oksuz (No 23?? 83'), Tolevski.

Goals: Georgioski 75'

Cautions: Miskas 45', Tolevski 57'.

Red Cards: Bosevski 90'.

MELBOURNE KNIGHTS: Ozdemir, Elvin, Cumming, Fitzgerald, Grbesa, Watson, Groenewald (Dugandzic 65'), Draper (Cannell 90'), Hatzimouratis, Lagana (Yabio 74'), Kiratzoglou.

Goals: Watson 75' 94'.

Cautions: Lagana 57', Fitzgerald 70', Yabio 90'.

Red Cards: None.

MoM: Cameron Watson (MK)
CROWD: Approx 2000 @ BT CONNOR RESERVE.

By Andrew Fisher

Photos by Nome Risteski & Steve Starek

Preston get the show on the road with a well taken effort by Georgievski
Photo: Nome Riseski

Cameron Watson celebrates his second goal yesterday.
to clinch a heartstopping derby win. Photo: Steve Starek

OAKLEIGH CANNONS

4 - 1

HEIDELBERG UNITED

CANNONS' CAKEWALK!

Oakleigh Opens Season In Style

Oakleigh has maintained its recent superiority over Heidelberg with a convincing 4-1 victory at Jack Edwards Reserve on Friday night. The Cannons took an early lead and effectively sealed the three points shortly after the half hour mark, by which stage they had established a 3-0 lead.

After playing out two scoreless draws in the 2008 season, fans of both teams could have expected another tight contest, but it was the home team who scored after just 3 minutes on the clock. After some neat lead-up play by Kioussis on the Oakleigh left, the winger's dangerous cross found its way to Trent Waterson. The latter expertly played in recruit Dario Matkovic, whose well-timed run from deep on the right allowed him time to take aim and blast home for a 1-0 lead to Oakleigh. The goal stung the visitors, who looked to hit back through Stefanou, but the defender's header was just over Cagalj's crossbar.

With just 20 minutes on the clock, the Cannons doubled their lead, after again exposing the visitors' defensive frailties. Again, Kioussis' lead up work on the left led to a scrambling Jones half-clearance that fell obligingly for Waterson to rifle home a low strike past Gavalas. The Cannons at this stage were well on top, with their counterattacks causing the Heidelberg defence no shortage of headaches. Heidelberg were certainly getting their share of possession, but Rozman & Stelios Drakos held sway at the back for Oakleigh.

Shortly after the half hour mark, a solo effort by Alilovic flashed just wide of the uprights, as the visitors tried desperately to claw their way back into the match. However, moments later, a well-constructed goal clinically finished by midfield dynamo Bill Damianos, saw Oakleigh to a commanding 3-0 lead. A brilliant counter-attack on the left by the Cannons with the ensuing cross-field ball finding Diaco, who controlled the ball & casually laid it off to Damianos. who was able to steer a well-placed shot home. The 3-0 screline effectively made it game over before half-time.

To their credit, Heidelberg pressed on & Alilovic might have scored, but his low shot on the turn was well parried away by Cagalj. New signing Osagie Ederaro pulled one back for the visitors on the stroke of half-time, after a neat one-two ball with Alilovic played the striker in on goal. He maintained his composure well enough to slot the ball past Cagalj & give the 'Bergers a glimmer of hope going into the second half.

Both coaches made a change at half-time, with Obradovic introduced for the Cannons replacing Kioussis & Vassiliadis replacing Drossos for the 'Bergers. Once again, it was Oakleigh who started the half with a goal, this time on 48 minutes through striker Ricky Diaco. The goal was set up, by his strike partner Jerry Karpeh, who picked up a loose ball & with the Heidelberg defence in retreat, his angled ball found Waterson streaming down the right wing. Waterson checked & played a lovely through ball to Diaco, who swept the ball into the back of the net past a sprawling Gavalas to restore the three goal lead to Oakleigh.

With the game firmly in their keep, Oakleigh were content now to play on the counter, and although Heidelberg continued to press, any chances created were dealt with by Oakleigh's defence well enough. Both sides might have scored with Heidelberg's Ederaro finding the side-netting from a goal-scoring position & tem-mate Hockless having a shot well-saved by Cagalj. For Oakleigh, Karpeh came close with a low shot well-parried by Gavalas, and substitute Simon Mur almost shooting homewith his first touch.

Overall, this was a great start to 2009 for the Cannons, who now host newly-promoted Dandenong Thunder next Friday night at Jack Edwards Reserve. For the visiting Heidelberg, they travel to Bob Jane Stadium next Sunday to face arch-rivals South Melbourne, looking to exact some revenge for their 3-0 loss to South in the Hellenic Cup Final recently, but perhaps more importantly, aiming to secure its first points of the 2009 season,

Final Score at Jack Edwards Reserve: Oakleigh Cannons 4 defeated Heidelberg United 1 (HT 3-1).

Goals: Oakleigh: Matkovic 3', Waterson 20', Damianos 35', Diaco 48'
Heidelberg: Ederaro 45+2'

Player of the Match: Trent Waterson (Oakleigh Cannons)

Crowd: approx. 1750

Team Line-Ups:

Oakleigh Cannons:
Cagalj – Aristidis Drakos, Rozman, Matkovic, Stelios Drakos – Hatzikostas, Damianos, Kioussis (Obradovic 45'), Waterson (Mur 80') – Diaco (Roias 82'), Karpeh

Yellow cards: Kioussis, Matkovic
Red cards: Nil

Heidelberg United:
Gavalas – Stefanou (Ameti 63'), Roberts, Jones, Drossos (Vassiliadis 45') – Ouliaris, Ederaro, Magnacca (Petta 67'), Hockless, Gasparis, Aliliovic

Yellow cards: Gasparis, Ouliaris
Red cards: Nil

By John Fotinos

Photos by John Punshon

AUSTRALIA PFA PREMIER FOOTBALL ACADEMY

PFA Australia Easter Clinics

Join UK Academy Coach (UFEA recognised) and development specialist Lee Waddington for our Easter clinics.

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Venue: Glenroy, Melbourne
ONLY OPEN TO PFAA ACADEMY PLAYERS

Dates: April 8th & 9th
Venue: Glenroy, Melbourne
Open to all players aged between 7 –17 years old

Dates: April 14th & 15th
Venue: Cranbourne, Melbourne
Availability: bookings being taken now
Open to all players aged between 13-17 years old

Dates: April 16th & 17th
Venue: Brighton, Melbourne
Open to players aged between 7-17 years old

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Oakleigh's Man of the Match Trent Waterson gets ready for the challenge from Heidelberg skipper Tony Ouliaris.

SOUTH THUNDERSTRUCK!

Thunder Stuns In VPL Debut

Dandenong Thunder have commenced Victorian Premier League life in stunning style by defeating South Melbourne FC at Bob Jane Stadium on Sunday evening.

South came into the game in form following a clinical 3-0 victory over Heidelberg last Sunday in the Hellenic Cup final and had high expectations going into today's game.

Dandenong on the other hand came into the game as an unknown quantity with plenty of VPL experience in former South Melbourne NSL players Levent Osman and Marcus Stergiopoulos, as well as former Wellington Phoenix goalkeeper Stuart Webster.

The first half started off in true round 1 fashion, with both sides coming out of the blocks quite slowly in an attempt to feel out their opponents.

South's first genuine goal scoring opportunity came when former New Zealand International hit the upright from a tight angle, following some excellent work by Goran Zoric on the left flank.

Dandenong, despite ample possession really didn't muster an opportunity until former South winger Hamlet Armenian broke down the right to send a dangerous cross into the path of Colin Quirk who failed to capitalise on the golden chance.

However it was Dandenong that would go into the break with a one goal advantage following a mix-up in the South Melbourne defence that saw newly appointed club captain Rama Tavsancioglu slot the ball past a helpless Tommi Tomich in goal.

The second half commenced in a similar manner to the first, with both sides quite reserved in the opening 20-25 minutes of play.

South though seemingly had the better opportunities of the period, with both Goran Zoric and Joseph Youssef having chances foiled by the desperate Thunder defence.

With Dandenong sitting back, South continued to pile on the pressure and with five minutes to go missed another chance at goal, with another Zoric shot being blocked by the defence.

As the whistle blew, hundreds of travelling Thunder fans hailed the victory, their first ever in the Victorian Premier League.

SMFC Line-up
Tommi Tomich, Shane Nunes, Rhodri Payne, Steven O'Dor, Vaughan Coveny, Gianni De Nittis (Nick Curtis), Joseph Youssef, Rama Tavsacioglu, Fernando De Moraes (Danni Radojicic), Stiven Mrkela (Sebastian Petrovic)

Dandenong Line-up
Stuart Webster, Jack Hingert, Levant Osman, Aron Wilford, Hamlet Armenian, Marcus Stergiopoulos, Ryan Davidson, James Thomas, Colin Quirk, Veton Korcarevski

By George Kouroumalis

Photos by Peter Psarros

KICKING OUT OF TUNE!

Flicking Through Football's Song Book

In a partnership, bond or any other sort of union, compatibility is the most binding of characteristics. Find someone you're attracted to and share interests with – get married. You enjoy tennis, you meet someone else who also plays – you become tennis partners. You own a factory that manufactures mortars, they own a pestle producing factory – you merge. Where compatibility exists, it makes sense for a bond to be formed. But in the coupling of football and song, logic has been rarely consulted and the output has largely been discordant array of songs.

So why then has the marriage of football and song for the most part been such an uneasy union? The two hold such successful and significant individual existences but their coming together is one that has spawned progeny that suggests an incompatibility between the genes of its forebearers.

The two have been forced to co-mingle on a commercial level and have produced what would kindly be referred to as 'varied' results (to be truthful, there isn't a great deal of variance in the product, the majority are rubbish). It's the forced collaboration between football and music that has produced the mutant musical products, and it's with FIFA's official backing that the greatest mutations have occurred.

It isn't that the two haven't long been intertwined. Music has an inescapable bond with football. Atmospheric chants from the stands have the power to enliven the dullest affairs and spur on team performance. Oasis' Noel Gallagher even traces his informal musical training to the unrefined hollering he used to lead in Manchester City's stands.

In the terraces of football clubs big and small the world over, fans annex songs to honour club and player, or demean constituents of the opposition. It's a casual bond between football and song that is long-lasting, its compatibility drawn from the passion for the game of the thousands of part-time performers from whose strained voices they emanate.

So successful was one of these chants, it made the reverse transition from the stands to the studio. Niall Quinn's Disco Pants, a harmonious tribute to Niall Quinn's cut-off jeans, first sung by Manchester City fans on seeing the lanky Irishman dancing in an Italian nightclub in truncated denim duds, later achieved official release and moderate success thanks Sunderland fans.

The compatibility between song and football in the informal context of the stands suggests there is hope for the pairing. So sure of the bond between music and football – or at least the commercial viability of the combination of the two – the wise heads at FIFA have come to officially sanction the marriage, presiding over the union every four years as part of World Cup festivities.

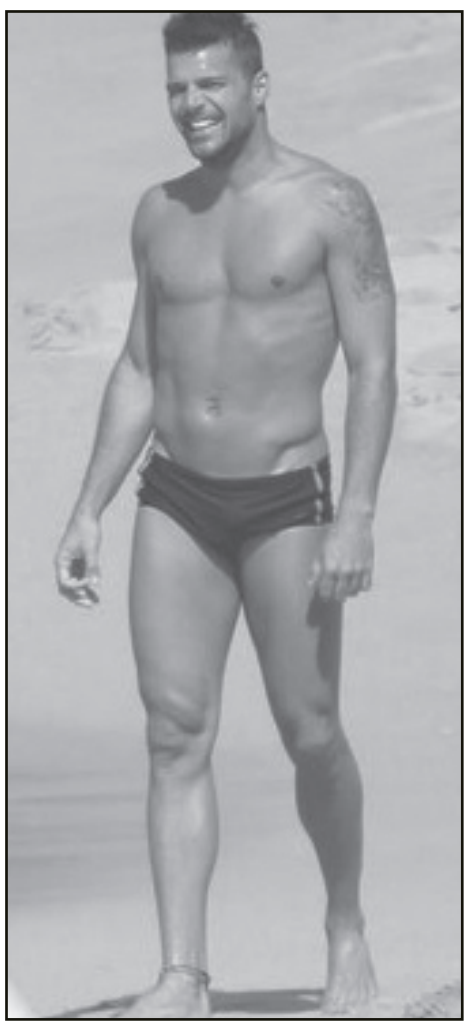
Since 1990, it's been customary for FIFA to assign an official song to its quadrennial football spectacular, imparting on the football masses a concoction of music and their beloved sport that generally makes about as much sense as David James and Scott Carlson starting up front for England.

Every four years brings about a musical attempt at inspiration, with the performers seemingly picked through some random process that doesn't in anyway discriminate in favour of ability or relevance. In case the memorable World Cup do-diddies have slipped your mind or been erased through years of psychiatric treatment, let's run through the magical moments.

Who needs a Fat Lady to sing when you've got these three guys on the bench to belt one out? The Three Tenors get their XXXL size shirts ready for a rousing performance at Italia 90.

Gianna Nannini and Edoardo Bennato led the World Cup anthem line in 1990 with their contribution Un'estate Italiana (An Italian Summer). Probably the selection that has made the most sense of all the anthems: Italian World Cup, Italian performers performing an Italian song. And they provided an answer for all those who ever wondered what Journey and Pat Benatar would sound like if they teamed up for a collaboration in Italian.

On to the land of the free and home of the brave, and Daryl Hall and The Sounds of Blackness crammed levels of corniness into four minutes and twelve seconds that defied all scientific research with their offering Gloryland. 50 percent of pop music duo Hall and Oates put together this gospel inspired-number which offered advice for existential and religious advancement; it also had football connotations (if you listened hard enough and were willing to be extremely figurative).



Ricky Martin gets ready to clear the throat with some pre-season training

Puerto Rican knee-wobbler Ricky Martin was next up lending the 1998 French World cup The Cup of Life for its official song. Martin's bi-lingual, cliché-sodden tune presumed all teams were equal, and that desire was the determinant of the champion. His opening cries of "Do you really want it?" presumably directed at the tournament's constituents. Somehow I don't think it was Saudi Arabia's strength of desire that cost them the trophy, Ricky.

By now, a discernable protocol had been established: songs had to be all about inspiration and idealism. Anyone can win the World Cup. Reach for the stars. Never give up. Everyone is equal. Insert idealistic aphorism here.

Onward the World Cup jukebox continued, method firmly established.

The first World Cup of the new millennium, and the first on Asian soil. A chance to capture Asian culture through song perhaps? Not quite.

American thunder throat Anastacia blessed, no, burdened the football world with her official 2002 contribution, Boom. Is there anyone more synonymous with football than Anastacia? I think not. Perhaps they were going for the 'Soccer Mum' appeal. Despite Anastacia's insistence she's yet to reach her thirties. Regrettably Anastacia didn't test out her lyrical query of "If I go away would you follow me?", and we were stuck with her for the entirety of the tournament.

The World Cup music scene doubled its output in 2002, producing both an official song and anthem. Reputable Greek composer Vangelis contributed the imaginatively titled FIFA 2002 World Cup Anthem as the musical companion of Anastacia's Boom.

To Germany 2006, the epicentre of electronic music but a land, according to FIFA, better personified by the unconscionable marriage of R&B and opera brought about by Il Divo and Toni Braxton's The Time of Our Lives. While the official anthem came in the form of Herbert Grönemeyer's multilingual Celebrate the Day.

So after almost 20 years of the official combining of football and music and we seem no closer to finding compatibility. However, FIFA is not alone in playing matchmaker between football and song. English football authorities seized on the commercial opportunities and provided the national side with tunes to call their own.

England and Liverpool star John Barnes pre-empted rap greats Tupac and Biggie with his rap jaunt on New Order's World in Motion, England's 1990 World Cup anthem. The song headed to the top of the charts on the back of precise on-pitch advice and synthesised drum beats, and Barnes managed to evade the rap wars of the time that took the lives of so many of his fellow rappers.

While the song still spoke in clichés and idealism, a minor breakthrough had been made: the incorporation of football knowledge and identities.

1996, the English national side is on its way to Euro '96 and Britpop is at its peak. A moment on the timeline of football songs akin to the splitting of the atom is about to occur as Britpop outfit The Lightning Seeds team with comedians David Baddiel and Frank Skinner to create Three Lions, a rare musical entity that spoke of football reality.

Amidst the symphony of music and football mismatches, Three Lions made sense. It galvanised public opinion of the nation's football side, acknowledging its foibles and still managing to instil optimism. After some repackaging, the song reached number one status for a second time in 1998 as part of England's World Cup campaign.

But this great discovery did not redefine the relationship between football and song. The lovey-dovey, artificially inspired recipe continues to be favoured. Do football authorities really think fans are need their insecurities consoled? Or do they seek to play on delusions of grandeur, hoping to draw fans in with false expectations of ultimate success?

It's not likely we'll hear ultra-realism along the lines of "You're going home after the first round with zero points and a goal difference of negative nine" in amongst the lyrics of an official football anthem anytime soon, but they would make a welcome change from the pedestrian template that continues to be employed.

So we await news of selection for the 2010 official song and the next chapter in the song book of football as the search for compatibility continues. Anyone for a Britney Spears and Guns N Roses collaboration...?

By Sebastian Kipman

Photos by Various Artists

FOXTEL CUP
The Victorian Football Show
Every Wednesday C31 8pm

The Green Gully Football Show
Every Saturday C31 10.30am

FOX SPORTS

ASIAN CUP
Australia v Kuwait
Thursday 5 March
Fox Sports 1 7.00 pm
(KO 8.00 pm)

ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE
Wed Mar 4 **Portsmouth v Chelsea**
6.40 am Fox Sports 2
Wed Mar 4 **West Brom v Arsenal**
6.40 am Fox Sports 3
Thurs Mar 5 **Newcastle v Ma Utd**
6.40 am Fox Sports 2
Thurs Mar 5 **Man City v Aston Villa**
6.40 am Fox Sports 3
Thurs Mar 5 **Stoke v Bolton**
6.40 am Viewers Choice
Thurs Mar 5 **Wigan v West Ham**
6.40 am Viewers Choice
Thurs Mar 5 **Blackburn v Everton**
6.55 am Viewers Choice
Thurs Mar 5 **Tottenham v Middlesbrough**
6.55 am Viewers Choice

MAGAZINE SHOWS
Fox Sports FC
Tuesday 3 March
Fox Sports 1
7.30 pm

SETANTA SPORTS

Tuesday 3rd March
6:30am Blue Square Premier **Histon vs Cambridge** LIVE

Wednesday 4th March
12:00am MUTV: League Cup Final **Man Utd vs Tottenham**
6:00am SPL **Falkirk vs Dundee Utd** LIVE
8:30pm Barca TV: La Liga **Atl Madrid vs Barcelona**

Thursday 5th March
3:15am CHTV: EPL **Portsmouth vs Chelsea**
6:00am SPL **Kilmarnock vs Celtic** LIVE
9:30am Copa Libertadores **Deportivo Tachira vs Boca Juniors** LIVE
11:30am SPL **Rangers vs Inverness** CT
3:00pm MUTV: EPL **Newcastle vs Man Utd**
10:30pm German Cup **B Leverkusen vs B Munich**

Friday 6th March
6:30am FA Youth Cup Quarter Final **Spur vs Arsenal** LIVE

Saturday 7th March
6:30am Bundesliga **Schalke 04 vs Cologne** LIVE
11:00pm FA Cup Quarter-Final **Coventry vs Chelsea** LIVE

Sunday 8th March
1:45am SPL **St Mirren vs Celtic**
3:45am FA Cup Quarter-Final **Fulham vs Man U** LIVE
11:30pm FA Cup 5th Round **Arsenal vs Burnley** LIVE

Monday 9th March
2:30am FA Cup Quarter Final **Everton vs Middlesbrough** LIVE
7:00am Ligue 1 **St Etienne vs Nantes** LIVE
9:00am Scottish Cup Quarter Final **Rangers vs Hamilton**

BECKHAM ADMITS FRUSTRATION

David Beckham admitted on Friday he has become frustrated over the protracted transfer saga surrounding his proposed move from Los Angeles Galaxy to AC Milan.

Beckham's mood was not helped by Milan's departure from the UEFA Cup on Thursday night as once again they blew a lead before crashing out of Europe's second-tier competition to Werder Bremen.

Milan were 2-0 up at half-time but the Germans fought back to draw 2-2 and qualify for the next round on the away goals rule after a 1-1 draw in the first leg.

But it is the uncertainty surrounding his proposed permanent move to Milan that has left the on-loan Galaxy player feeling blue.

Asked if he was frustrated, Beckham simply replied: "Of course. There's a lot going on and a lot being said and every day there's someone asking me questions.

"It is being said every day but so far I've been able to concentrate on the football."

However, Beckham admitted that he felt in the dark over the transfer and said he knew of no new developments.

Last week Milan vice-president Adriano Galliani said the Italian giants would not be increasing their reported three million dollars bid for the 33-year-old former England captain.

That was a bid that Galaxy described as "ridiculous", claiming it would not even come close to covering the amount they would lose should Beckham leave Major League Soccer.

Galliani had said that Milan would be prepared to wait until October or November when Beckham could invoke a get-out clause and leave Los Angeles for free.

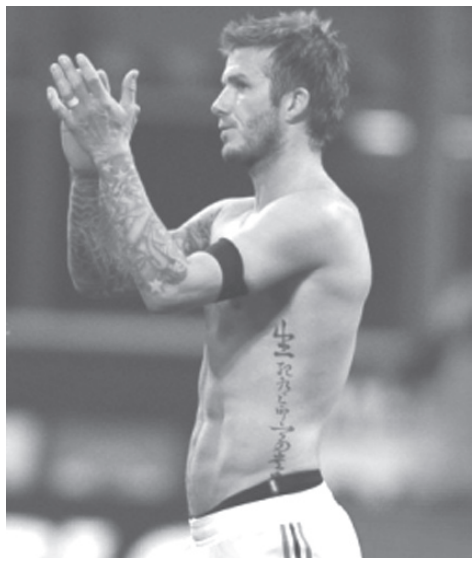
At the moment he is due to return to Galaxy on March 9 but that is not something he wants to consider.

"You're better off asking someone else about that because it doesn't change me wanting to play at this club and I'm sure it doesn't change other people's desire for me to stay and play for this club either, so we'll just have to wait and see," he said.

"At the moment its all just being discussed and negotiated."

Last week the former Manchester United and Real Madrid star had said he thought something would happen this week while insisting that he is determined to remain in the Italian fashion capital.

"I want to stay at Milan, I've not heard anything from Galaxy but when it's like that you could say it could be good news," he said after the 1-0 win over Cagliari.



David Beckham (pictured) admitted on Friday he has become frustrated over the protracted transfer saga surrounding his proposed move from Los Angeles Galaxy to AC Milan.

WAG OF THE WEEK

Charlotte Mears Age: 25
Insignificant other: Tottenham Striker, Jermain Defoe

FOOTBALL QUOTES

"You can't play with a one-armed goalkeeper - not at this level!"
Kevin Keegan

"My favourite is classical art - there have been so many great artists. But I like modern as well. It's nice on the eye." **Steven Gerrard**

"I've had 14 bookings this season, 8 of which were my fault but the other 7 were disputable!"
Paul Gascoigne

"I wouldn't be bothered if we lost every match this year as long as we win the league!"
Mark Viduka

"Alex Ferguson is the best manager I've ever had at this level. Well, he's the only manager I've actually had at this level. But he's the best manager I've ever had."
David Beckham

"The only thing I have in common with George Best is that we come from the same place... play for the same club... and were discovered by the same man."
Norman Whiteside

"I don't want to be modelling G-strings - it's not that good for my image. I'm a footballer not a tart."
Michael Owen

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FOOTBALL FEDERATION VICTORIA

STATE LEAGUE ONE

goal! Weekly

Round 1
Fri 27 Mar 8PM Bentleigh Greens v Frankston Pines Kingston Heath
Sat 28 Mar 3PM Fawkner Blues v Northcote City CB Smith Res
Sat 28 Mar 3PM Langwarrin v Bulleen Royals Lawton Park Res
Sat 28 Mar 3PM Southern Stars v St Albans Saints Ross Res
Sat 28 Mar 3PM Clifton Hill v Pascoe Vale Kevin Bartlett Res
Sat 28 Mar 6:30PM Springvale White Eagles v Western Suburbs White Eagles Stdm

Round 2
Fri 3 Apr 8PM Bentleigh Greens v Langwarrin Kingston Heath Soccer Complex
Sat 4 Apr 6:30PM Springvale White Eagles v St Albans Saints White Eagles Stdm
Sat 4 Apr 7PM Frankston Pines v Northcote City Monterey Res
Sun 5 Apr 3PM Western Suburbs v Clifton Hill Ralph Res
Sun 5 Apr 3PM Fawkner Blues v Pascoe Vale CB Smith Res
Mon 8 Jun 8:15PM Bulleen Royals v Southern Stars Veneto Social Club

Round 3
Sat 18 Apr 3PM Langwarrin v Northcote City Lawton Park Res
Sat 18 Apr 3PM Southern Stars v Bentleigh Greens Ross Res
Sat 18 Apr 3PM Clifton Hill v St Albans Saints Kevin Bartlett Res
Sat 18 Apr 3PM Pascoe Vale v Western Suburbs Hosken Res
Sat 18 Apr 6:30PM Springvale White Eagles v Bulleen Royals White Eagles Stadium
Sat 18 Apr 7PM Frankston Pines v Fawkner Blues Monterey Res

Round 4
Fri 24 Apr 8PM Bentleigh Greens v Springvale White Eagles Kingston Heath
Sat 25 Apr 3PM Pascoe Vale v Frankston Pines Hosken Res
Sat 25 Apr 3PM Northcote City v Southern Stars John Cain Memorial Park
Sun 26 Apr 3PM St Albans Saints v Western Suburbs Churchill Res
Sun 26 Apr 3PM Fawkner Blues v Langwarrin CB Smith Res
Mon 27 Apr 8:15PM Bulleen Royals v Clifton Hill Veneto Social Club

Round 5
Sat 2 May 3PM Langwarrin v Frankston Pines Lawton Park Res
Sat 2 May 3PM Southern Stars v Fawkner Blues Ross Res
Sat 2 May 3PM Clifton Hill v Bentleigh Greens Kevin Bartlett Res
Sat 2 May 6:30PM Springvale White Eagles v Northcote City White Eagles Stadium
Sun 3 May 3PM Western Suburbs v Bulleen Royals Ralph Res
Sun 3 May 3PM St Albans Saints v Pascoe Vale Churchill Res

Round 6
Fri 8 May 8PM Bentleigh Greens v Western Suburbs Kingston Heath
Sat 9 May 3PM Pascoe Vale v Langwarrin Hosken Res
Sat 9 May 3PM Northcote City v Clifton Hill John Cain Memorial Park
Sat 9 May 7PM Frankston Pines v Southern Stars Monterey Res
Sun 10 May 3PM Fawkner Blues v Springvale White Eagles CB Smith Res
Mon 11 May 8:15PM Bulleen Royals v St Albans Saints Veneto Social Club

Round 7
Sat 16 May 3PM Southern Stars v Langwarrin Ross Res
Sat 16 May 3PM Clifton Hill v Fawkner Blues Kevin Bartlett Res
Sat 16 May 6:30PM Springvale White Eagles v Frankston Pines White Eagles Stdm
Sun 17 May 3PM Western Suburbs v Northcote City Ralph Res
Sun 17 May 3PM St Albans Saints v Bentleigh Greens Churchill Res
Mon 18 May 8:15PM Bulleen Royals v Pascoe Vale Veneto Social Club

Round 8
Sat 23 May 3PM Pascoe Vale v Southern Stars Hosken Res
Sat 23 May 3PM Northcote City v St Albans Saints John Cain Memorial Park
Sat 23 May 3PM Langwarrin v Springvale White Eagles Lawton Park Res
Sat 23 May 7PM Frankston Pines v Clifton Hill Monterey Res
Sun 24 May 3PM Fawkner Blues v Western Suburbs CB Smith Res
Mon 25 May 8PM Bentleigh Greens v Bulleen Royals Kingston Heath

Round 9
Sat 30 May 3PM Clifton Hill v Langwarrin Kevin Bartlett Res
Sat 30 May 6:30PM Springvale White Eagles v Southern Stars White Eagles Stdm
Sun 31 May 3PM Western Suburbs v Frankston Pines Ralph Res
Sun 31 May 3PM St Albans Saints v Fawkner Blues Churchill Res
Sun 31 May 3PM Bentleigh Greens v Pascoe Vale Kingston Heath
Mon 1 Jun 8:15PM Bulleen Royals v Northcote City Veneto Social Club

Round 10
Sat 13 Jun 3PM Northcote City v Bentleigh Greens John Cain Memorial Park
Sat 13 Jun 3PM Langwarrin v Western Suburbs Lawton Park Res
Sat 13 Jun 3PM Southern Stars v Clifton Hill Ross Res
Sat 13 Jun 6:30PM Springvale White Eagles v Pascoe Vale White Eagles Stadium
Sat 13 Jun 7PM Frankston Pines v St Albans Saints Monterey Res
Sun 14 Jun 3PM Fawkner Blues v Bulleen Royals CB Smith Res

Round 11
Sat 20 Jun 3PM Clifton Hill v Springvale White Eagles Kevin Bartlett Res
Sat 20 Jun 3PM Pascoe Vale v Northcote City Hosken Res
Sun 21 Jun 3PM Western Suburbs v Southern Stars Ralph Res
Sun 21 Jun 3PM St Albans Saints v Langwarrin Churchill Res
Sun 21 Jun 3PM Bentleigh Greens v Fawkner Blues Kingston Heath
Mon 22 Jun 8:15PM Bulleen Royals v Frankston Pines Veneto Social Club

Round 12
Sat 27 Jun 3PM Northcote City v Fawkner Blues John Cain Memorial Park
Sat 27 Jun 3PM Pascoe Vale v Clifton Hill Hosken Res
Sat 27 Jun 7PM Frankston Pines v Bentleigh Greens Monterey Res
Sun 28 Jun 3PM St Albans Saints v Southern Stars Churchill Res
Sun 28 Jun 3PM Western Suburbs v Springvale White Eagles Ralph Res
Mon 29 Jun 8:15PM Bulleen Royals v Langwarrin Veneto Social Club

Round 13
Sat 4 Jul 3PM Clifton Hill v Western Suburbs Kevin Bartlett Res
Sat 4 Jul 3PM Southern Stars v Bulleen Royals Ross Res
Sat 4 Jul 3PM Langwarrin v Bentleigh Greens Lawton Park Res
Sat 4 Jul 3PM Pascoe Vale v Fawkner Blues Hosken Res
Sat 4 Jul 3PM Northcote City v Frankston Pines John Cain Memorial Park
Sun 5 Jul 3PM St Albans Saints v Springvale White Eagles Churchill Res

Round 14
Sat 11 Jul 3PM Northcote City v Langwarrin John Cain Memorial Park
Sat 11 Jul 3PM Western Suburbs v Pascoe Vale Ralph Res
Sun 12 Jul 3PM Fawkner Blues v Frankston Pines CB Smith Res
Sun 12 Jul 3PM Bentleigh Greens v Southern Stars Kingston Heath
Sun 12 Jul 3PM St Albans Saints v Clifton Hill Churchill Res
Mon 13 Jul 8:15PM Bulleen Royals v Springvale White Eagles Veneto Social Club

Round 15
Sat 18 Jul 3PM Clifton Hill v Bulleen Royals Kevin Bartlett Res
Sat 18 Jul 3PM Southern Stars v Northcote City Ross Res
Sat 18 Jul 3PM Langwarrin v Fawkner Blues Lawton Park Res
Sat 18 Jul 6:30PM Springvale White Eagles v Bentleigh Greens White Eagles Stdm
Sat 18 Jul 7PM Frankston Pines v Pascoe Vale Monterey Res
Mon 19 Jul 3PM Western Suburbs v St Albans Saints Ralph Res

Round 16
Sat 25 Jul 3PM Northcote City v Springvale White Eagles John Cain Mem Park
Sat 25 Jul 3PM Pascoe Vale v St Albans Saints Hosken Res
Sat 25 Jul 7PM Frankston Pines v Langwarrin Monterey Res
Sun 26 Jul 3PM Fawkner Blues v Southern Stars CB Smith Res
Sun 26 Jul 3PM Bentleigh Greens v Clifton Hill Kingston Heath Soccer Complex
Mon 27 Jul 8:15PM Bulleen Royals v Western Suburbs Veneto Social Club

Round 17
Sat 1 Aug 3PM Langwarrin v Pascoe Vale Lawton Park Res
Sat 1 Aug 3PM Clifton Hill v Northcote City Kevin Bartlett Res
Sat 1 Aug 3PM Southern Stars v Frankston Pines Ross Res
Sat 1 Aug 6:30PM Springvale White Eagles v Fawkner Blues White Eagles Stdm
Sun 2 Aug 3PM St Albans Saints v Bulleen Royals Churchill Res
Sun 2 Aug 3PM Western Suburbs v Bentleigh Greens Ralph Res

Round 18
Sat 8 Aug 3PM Langwarrin v Southern Stars Lawton Park Res
Sat 8 Aug 3PM Northcote City v Western Suburbs John Cain Memorial Park
Sat 8 Aug 3PM Pascoe Vale v Bulleen Royals Hosken Res
Sat 8 Aug 7PM Frankston Pines v Springvale WHITE EAGLES Monterey Res
Sun 9 Aug 3PM Fawkner Blues v Clifton Hill CB Smith Res
Sun 9 Aug 3PM Bentleigh Greens v St Albans Saints Kingston Heath

Round 19
Sat 15 Aug 3PM Southern Stars v Pascoe Vale Ross Res
Sat 15 Aug 3PM Clifton Hill v Frankston Pines Kevin Bartlett Res
Sat 15 Aug 6:30PM Springvale WHITE EAGLES v Langwarrin White Eagles Stdm
Sun 16 Aug 3PM St Albans Saints v Northcote City Churchill Res
Sun 16 Aug 3PM Western Suburbs v Fawkner Blues Ralph Res
Mon 17 Aug 8:15PM Bulleen Royals v Bentleigh Greens Veneto Social Club

Round 20
Sat 22 Aug 3PM Southern Stars v Springvale WHITE EAGLES Ross Res
Sat 22 Aug 3PM Langwarrin v Clifton Hill Lawton Park Res
Sat 22 Aug 3PM Northcote City v Bulleen Royals John Cain Memorial Park
Sat 22 Aug 3PM Pascoe Vale v Bentleigh Greens Hosken Res
Sat 22 Aug 7PM Frankston Pines v Western Suburbs Monterey Res
Sun 23 Aug 3PM Fawkner Blues v St Albans Saints CB Smith Res

Round 21
Sat 29 Aug 3PM Pascoe Vale v Springvale WHITE EAGLES Hosken Res
Sat 29 Aug 3PM Clifton Hill v Southern Stars Kevin Bartlett Res
Sun 30 Aug 3PM Bentleigh Greens v Northcote City Kingston Heath
Sun 30 Aug 3PM St Albans Saints v Frankston Pines Churchill Res
Sun 30 Aug 3PM Western Suburbs v Langwarrin Ralph Res
Mon 31 Aug 8:15PM Bulleen Royals v Fawkner Blues Veneto Social Club

Round 22
Sat 5 Sep 3PM Springvale WHITE EAGLES v Clifton Hill White Eagles Stadium
Sat 5 Sep 3PM Southern Stars v Western Suburbs Ross Res
Sat 5 Sep 3PM Langwarrin v St Albans Saints Lawton Park Res
Sat 5 Sep 3PM Fawkner Blues v Bentleigh Greens CB Smith Res
Sat 5 Sep 3PM Northcote City v Pascoe Vale John Cain Memorial Park
Sat 5 Sep 7PM Frankston Pines v Bulleen Royals Monterey Res

FIXTURE LIST 2009

Head over heals! GW photographer Steve Starek catches George Abatzidis' celebrations after scoring for St Albans Saints against Keilor Park in a Division One fixture last season. The saints won that day 2-0 with the other goal from Josip Loncaric.

Draw Notes:
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MELBOURNE VICTORY FC

Photo: Daniel Flis

A-LEAGUE CHAMPIONS 2008/09

A-LEAGUE GRAND FINAL I MELBOURNE VICTORY 1-0 ADELAIDE UNITED I ETIHAD STADIUM I SATURDAY 28TH FEBRUARY I CROWD 53, 273

FOOTBALL FEDERATION VICTORIA

STATE LEAGUE ONE

goal! Weekly

Round 1
Fri 27 Mar 8PM Bentleigh Greens v Frankston Pines Kingston Heath
Sat 28 Mar 3PM Fawkner Blues v Northcote City CB Smith Res
Sat 28 Mar 3PM Langwarrin v Bulleen Royals Lawton Park Res
Sat 28 Mar 3PM Southern Stars v St Albans Saints Ross Res
Sat 28 Mar 3PM Clifton Hill v Pascoe Vale Kevin Bartlett Res
Sat 28 Mar 6:30PM Springvale White Eagles v Western Suburbs White Eagles Stdm

Round 2
Fri 3 Apr 8PM Bentleigh Greens v Langwarrin Kingston Heath Soccer Complex
Sat 4 Apr 6:30PM Springvale White Eagles v St Albans Saints White Eagles Stdm
Sat 4 Apr 7PM Frankston Pines v Northcote City Monterey Res
Sun 5 Apr 3PM Western Suburbs v Clifton Hill Ralph Res
Sun 5 Apr 3PM Fawkner Blues v Pascoe Vale CB Smith Res
Mon 8 Jun 8:15PM Bulleen Royals v Southern Stars Veneto Social Club

Round 3
Sat 18 Apr 3PM Langwarrin v Northcote City Lawton Park Res
Sat 18 Apr 3PM Southern Stars v Bentleigh Greens Ross Res
Sat 18 Apr 3PM Clifton Hill v St Albans Saints Kevin Bartlett Res
Sat 18 Apr 3PM Pascoe Vale v Western Suburbs Hosken Res
Sat 18 Apr 6:30PM Springvale White Eagles v Bulleen Royals White Eagles Stadium
Sat 18 Apr 7PM Frankston Pines v Fawkner Blues Monterey Res

Round 4
Fri 24 Apr 8PM Bentleigh Greens v Springvale White Eagles Kingston Heath
Sat 25 Apr 3PM Pascoe Vale v Frankston Pines Hosken Res
Sat 25 Apr 3PM Northcote City v Southern Stars John Cain Memorial Park
Sun 26 Apr 3PM St Albans Saints v Western Suburbs Churchill Res
Sun 26 Apr 3PM Fawkner Blues v Langwarrin CB Smith Res
Mon 27 Apr 8:15PM Bulleen Royals v Clifton Hill Veneto Social Club

Round 5
Sat 2 May 3PM Langwarrin v Frankston Pines Lawton Park Res
Sat 2 May 3PM Southern Stars v Fawkner Blues Ross Res
Sat 2 May 3PM Clifton Hill v Bentleigh Greens Kevin Bartlett Res
Sat 2 May 6:30PM Springvale White Eagles v Northcote City White Eagles Stadium
Sun 3 May 3PM Western Suburbs v Bulleen Royals Ralph Res
Sun 3 May 3PM St Albans Saints v Pascoe Vale Churchill Res

Round 6
Fri 8 May 8PM Bentleigh Greens v Western Suburbs Kingston Heath
Sat 9 May 3PM Pascoe Vale v Langwarrin Hosken Res
Sat 9 May 3PM Northcote City v Clifton Hill John Cain Memorial Park
Sat 9 May 7PM Frankston Pines v Southern Stars Monterey Res
Sun 10 May 3PM Fawkner Blues v Springvale White Eagles CB Smith Res
Mon 11 May 8:15PM Bulleen Royals v St Albans Saints Veneto Social Club

Round 7
Sat 16 May 3PM Southern Stars v Langwarrin Ross Res
Sat 16 May 3PM Clifton Hill v Fawkner Blues Kevin Bartlett Res
Sat 16 May 6:30PM Springvale White Eagles v Frankston Pines White Eagles Stdm
Sun 17 May 3PM Western Suburbs v Northcote City Ralph Res
Sun 17 May 3PM St Albans Saints v Bentleigh Greens Churchill Res
Mon 18 May 8:15PM Bulleen Royals v Pascoe Vale Veneto Social Club

Round 8
Sat 23 May 3PM Pascoe Vale v Southern Stars Hosken Res
Sat 23 May 3PM Northcote City v St Albans Saints John Cain Memorial Park
Sat 23 May 3PM Langwarrin v Springvale White Eagles Lawton Park Res
Sat 23 May 7PM Frankston Pines v Clifton Hill Monterey Res
Sun 24 May 3PM Fawkner Blues v Western Suburbs CB Smith Res
Mon 25 May 8PM Bentleigh Greens v Bulleen Royals Kingston Heath

Round 9
Sat 30 May 3PM Clifton Hill v Langwarrin Kevin Bartlett Res
Sat 30 May 6:30PM Springvale White Eagles v Southern Stars White Eagles Stdm
Sun 31 May 3PM Western Suburbs v Frankston Pines Ralph Res
Sun 31 May 3PM St Albans Saints v Fawkner Blues Churchill Res
Sun 31 May 3PM Bentleigh Greens v Pascoe Vale Kingston Heath
Mon 1 Jun 8:15PM Bulleen Royals v Northcote City Veneto Social Club

Round 10
Sat 13 Jun 3PM Northcote City v Bentleigh Greens John Cain Memorial Park
Sat 13 Jun 3PM Langwarrin v Western Suburbs Lawton Park Res
Sat 13 Jun 3PM Southern Stars v Clifton Hill Ross Res
Sat 13 Jun 6:30PM Springvale White Eagles v Pascoe Vale White Eagles Stadium
Sat 13 Jun 7PM Frankston Pines v St Albans Saints Monterey Res
Sun 14 Jun 3PM Fawkner Blues v Bulleen Royals CB Smith Res

Round 11
Sat 20 Jun 3PM Clifton Hill v Springvale White Eagles Kevin Bartlett Res
Sat 20 Jun 3PM Pascoe Vale v Northcote City Hosken Res
Sun 21 Jun 3PM Western Suburbs v Southern Stars Ralph Res
Sun 21 Jun 3PM St Albans Saints v Langwarrin Churchill Res
Sun 21 Jun 3PM Bentleigh Greens v Fawkner Blues Kingston Heath
Mon 22 Jun 8:15PM Bulleen Royals v Frankston Pines Veneto Social Club

Round 12
Sat 27 Jun 3PM Northcote City v Fawkner Blues John Cain Memorial Park
Sat 27 Jun 3PM Pascoe Vale v Clifton Hill Hosken Res
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Sun 28 Jun 3PM St Albans Saints v Southern Stars Churchill Res
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Round 13
Sat 4 Jul 3PM Clifton Hill v Western Suburbs Kevin Bartlett Res
Sat 4 Jul 3PM Southern Stars v Bulleen Royals Ross Res
Sat 4 Jul 3PM Langwarrin v Bentleigh Greens Lawton Park Res
Sat 4 Jul 3PM Pascoe Vale v Fawkner Blues Hosken Res
Sat 4 Jul 3PM Northcote City v Frankston Pines John Cain Memorial Park
Sun 5 Jul 3PM St Albans Saints v Springvale White Eagles Churchill Res

Round 14
Sat 11 Jul 3PM Northcote City v Langwarrin John Cain Memorial Park
Sat 11 Jul 3PM Western Suburbs v Pascoe Vale Ralph Res
Sun 12 Jul 3PM Fawkner Blues v Frankston Pines CB Smith Res
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Sun 12 Jul 3PM St Albans Saints v Clifton Hill Churchill Res
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Round 15
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Mon 19 Jul 3PM Western Suburbs v St Albans Saints Ralph Res

Round 16
Sat 25 Jul 3PM Northcote City v Springvale White Eagles John Cain Mem Park
Sat 25 Jul 3PM Pascoe Vale v St Albans Saints Hosken Res
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Round 17
Sat 1 Aug 3PM Langwarrin v Pascoe Vale Lawton Park Res
Sat 1 Aug 3PM Clifton Hill v Northcote City Kevin Bartlett Res
Sat 1 Aug 3PM Southern Stars v Frankston Pines Ross Res
Sat 1 Aug 6:30PM Springvale White Eagles v Fawkner Blues White Eagles Stdm
Sun 2 Aug 3PM St Albans Saints v Bulleen Royals Churchill Res
Sun 2 Aug 3PM Western Suburbs v Bentleigh Greens Ralph Res

Round 18
Sat 8 Aug 3PM Langwarrin v Southern Stars Lawton Park Res
Sat 8 Aug 3PM Northcote City v Western Suburbs John Cain Memorial Park
Sat 8 Aug 3PM Pascoe Vale v Bulleen Royals Hosken Res
Sat 8 Aug 7PM Frankston Pines v Springvale WHITE EAGLES Monterey Res
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Round 19
Sat 15 Aug 3PM Southern Stars v Pascoe Vale Ross Res
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Photos: Daniel Flis

FOOTBALL VICTORIA COMMEMORATES

Tony Dunkerly (FFV President), Bridget Marcou (FFV Board Director), Mark Rendell (FFV CEO) and Matt Usher (FFV General Manager Business Development), gather to enjoy a monumental evening steeped in over a century of sporting history.

A trio who have contributed considerably towards Victorian football's most recent playing history; George Katsakis (Heidelberg United coach), Alan Davidson (former Socceroo, South Melbourne, Melbourne Knights star and living legend) together with Green Gully captain Dean Fak.

FOOTBALL Federation Victoria launched its 2009 Victorian Premier and Women Premier League's at Young and Jackson's Hotel last night, almost 125 years ago tothe day that football was born in this state.

On February 29, 1884, , a group of "gentlemen' of the Anglo-Australian Association Football Club fittingly met at Young and Jackson to make final arrangements for forming clubs in the various suburbs in and around Melbourne.

The meeting was a great success and It wasn't long before teams like Carlton, South Melbourne, Richmond and Prahan were competing on a regular basis.

Last night saw the unveiling of all 12 current VPL and the nine WPL club strips, along with special guest speakers including former Socceroo Alan Davidson and current Matilda's goalkeeper Melissa Barbieri.

FFV President, Mr Tony Dunkerley, said the role of both the men and women's premier league's remained vitally important in the current evolution of football in not only Victoria, but Australia.

"Many of the 12 VPL clubs are powerhouses of Australian football history," Mr Dunkerley said.

"Heidelberg, Preston, Sunshine, Green Gully, South Melbourne and Melbourne Knights have all played at a national level in the NSL.

"Melbourne Knights and South Melbourne between them have produced well over 50 Socceroos.

"The WPL comprises some powerful teams, some of which are stand alone clubs like Bendigo Vipers and Casey Comets –but all of which are part of the rapid improvement of the women's game in Victoria and Australia."

Dunkerley also stated, as well as being showcases of high-quality football, the VPL and WPL also have vital roles in producing the new generation of elite footballers in Victoria and beyond.

The competitions enable many players throughout the state to fulfill their potential because they are crucial stages in the pathway from junior competition, to the A-League and W League, international clubs and ultimately to representing Australia on the world stage.

Barbieri and Roddy Vargas are but two of the many who have come through FFV elite leagues and have represented Australia.

"We celebrate two things this week and that is the launch of a new season of elite football in Victoria, and the 125 year old vision generated in the Young and Jackson's building by the gentlemen of the association.

"I'm sure that the picture today is very different from the one they imagined but is one with which they would be nonetheless delighted."

The VPL season kicked off on the weekend, while the WPL in early April.

Matilda, Melbourne Victory and Box Hill Inter star Melissa Barbieri, was also in attendance to represent the WPL. She amused the crowd with an anecdote of her childhood playing days, disclosing she was actually once banned from playing for a short period of time because she kept goal for a boy's team.

Former Socceroo goalkeeper Jack Reilly joins Carlos Alberto Diego and Diego of the Four Diegos on the mike to chat fondly about World Cup '74, Schintler Reserve and the prospect of Australia hosting a World Cup in the future.

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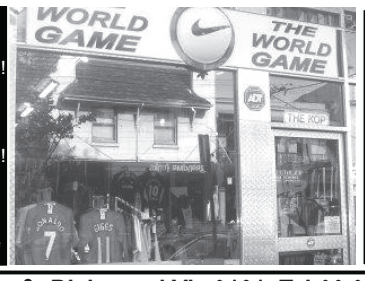

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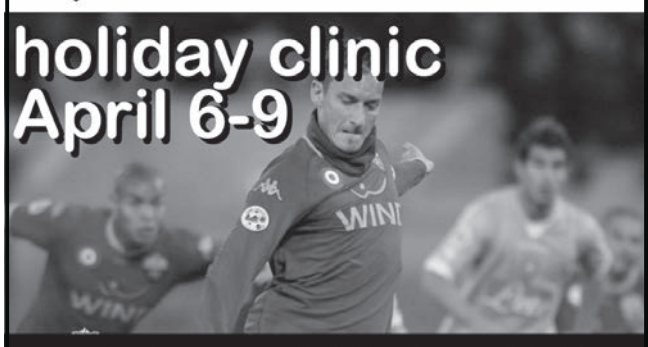

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MENS & JUNIORS

PREMIER PLATFORMS

The first season of the Victorian Premier League, 1991

The VPL was launched last week at a function which celebrated 125 years of football in Victoria and this year will be the 19th season of the Premier League.

In 1991 an unwieldy 18-team State League was cut to a more streamlined 14-team competition; rebadged and attempting to concentrate the talent and raise standards in local football. Not everyone was delighted with the change but the Victorian Soccer Federation under its President, John Dimtsis, and Chairman, Vito Cilauro, was determined to make it work as an attractive second tier competition in Australia. Joe Caruso chaired the Premier League Management Committee.

Albion, Altona Gate, Brunswick United Juventus, Bulleen, Croydon City, Doveton, Fawkner, Green Gully, Mooroolbark, Morwell Falcons, Northcote City, Oakleigh, St Albans and Thomastown took part in that inaugural season.

The competition was relentless throughout the season with Juventus stumbling in the penultimate round at Northcote City and Bulleen coming home with a wet sail so that only goal difference separated the two teams in the end. Morwell Falcons came third, five points adrift of the leaders who each had 38. Altona Gate was a further point behind and Thomastown and Fawkner each gained 29 points. In that first season there was no finals series, so the home and away results determined the championship. At the other end of the table Doveton was tailed off on 8 points and was relegated along with Northcote City which had twice as many. North Geelong and Knox City were to take their places for 1992.

Maria Carmigiani overcame scepticism about a woman as president of Juventus, though she was unable to solve one of the club's major problems, the lack of its own home ground. It had a ground sharing arrangement with Hellas, but that collapsed and its final two matches were played at Olympic Park and Schintler Reserve. Billy Rogers coached Juventus to the title in his first season with a squad which included veteran keeper Peter Laumets, Steve Marley, Jeff Doyle, Pat Della Rocca, Brian MacNicol, Steve Smith, Rino Minichiello, Dino Grillo, Sean Lane, and Fausto de Amicis. Smith was top scorer with 14 goals. Despite winning the league, Juventus was not promoted to the NSL as following the Bradley Report, promotion and relegation were frozen for two years.

Fabio Incantalupo of Bulleen was a popular and well-deserved winner of the Gold Medal sponsored by Diabetes Australia. He also received the Bill Fleming medal from the Victorian football media. Yet it was a bittersweet season for Incantalupo as his club missed the title and he suffered a broken leg which meant he missed the last three rounds of the season. His absence might have made a difference to Bulleen's championship drive. Sash Becvinovski of Green Gully was the Premier League's top scorer with 17 goals. Melbourne Victory's current assistant coach, Aaron Healey, was the recipient of the Weinstein Medal as the junior player of the year, and Socceroo Paul Wade received the Andy Kun Trophy as the Victorian Soccer Personality of 1991. At the end of 1991, George Wallace stepped down as Executive Director of the VSF and was succeeded by his deputy Terry Jones.

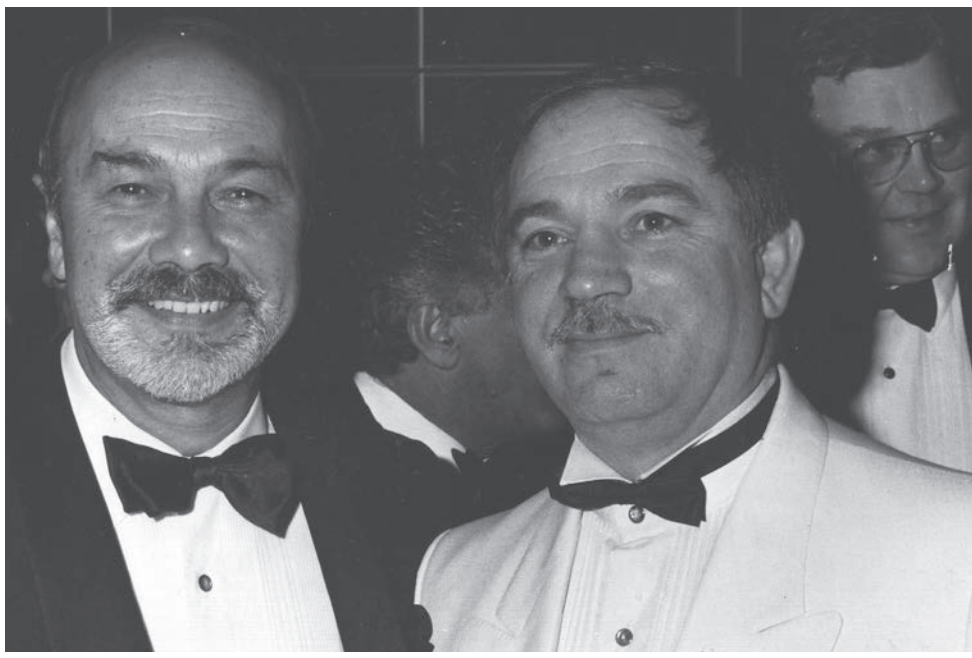
At the start 1991, Heidelberg United Alexander, Melbourne Croatia, Preston Makedonia, South Melbourne Hellas and Sunshine George Cross were members of the National Soccer League, though George Cross was relegated after Ernie Merrick was sacked as coach. He had brought a host of young talent into the club and saved the club money on transfers and wages, but that was not enough to save him.

South Melbourne Hellas won the Dockerty Cup, beating Sunshine George Cross by three goals to two in the final. Paul Wade with two and Peter Tsolakis scored for Hellas and John Waddell and Luciano Fabrizio for the Georgies. Hellas reached another cup final but Preston Makedonia took the Vic Health Gold Cup by two goals to one. Louie Bekiaris and Andrea Zinni were on target for Makedonia and Peter Tsolakis for Hellas.

Words by Roy Hay

Photos sourced by Roy Hay

Top of the table action from 1991 between Brunswick Juventus and Bulleen. John Corvan rises high to win the header for the Zebras. Photo: John Punshon



Joe Caruso, chair of the State League, right, and veteran journalist Fred Villiers. Photo: Les Shorrock collection, Deakin University Library.

Premier League top scorer in 1991, Sash Becvinovski of Green Gully. Photo: Les Shorrock collection, Deakin University Library.

John Dimtsis, President of the VSF in 1991. Photo: Les Shorrock collection, Deakin University Library.

Victorian Soccer Federation Premier League 1991

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts	GD
Brunswick Utd Juventus	26	16	6	4	49	13	38	36
Bulleen	26	15	8	3	54	28	38	26
Morwell Falcons	26	14	5	7	49	30	33	19
Altona Gate	26	13	6	7	40	26	32	14
Thomastown	26	12	5	9	30	20	29	10
Fawkner	26	10	9	7	33	30	29	3
Green Gully	26	9	10	7	35	32	28	3
Albion	26	9	8	9	43	32	26	11
St Albans	26	8	10	8	37	35	26	2
Croydon City	26	9	7	10	28	34	25	-6
Oakleigh	26	6	7	13	27	40	19	-13
Mooroolbark	26	8	1	17	27	54	17	-27
Northcote City	26	6	4	16	22	53	16	-31
Doveton	26	1	6	19	11	58	8	-47

Also in 1991...
Red Star Belgrade wins the European Cup...Portugal wins the FIFA U-20 World Cup...Collapse of Yugoslavia...Mike Tyson is arrested for raping Miss Black America contestant Desiree Washington...Collapse of the Soviet Union...Michael Schumacher makes his Formula 1 debut in the Belgian Grand Prix...The Republic of Macedonia becomes independent...LA Laker Magic Johnson announces that he has HIV...Paul Keating replaces Bob Hawke as the new prime minister of Australia...Freddie Mercury dies... Gulf War/Operation Desert Storm begins.

MacKenzie At Large

An Occasional Offering from Craig MacKenzie

Gardiner heads for Greens

BENTLEIGH Greens have massively revamped their senior squad for season 2009 and the club is aiming for a Premier League berth next season.

Dean Hennessy, who guided Southern Stars in 2008, took over as Greens senior coach last October and this week welcomes 22-year-old Scottish recruit Ross Gardiner, a central defender or left back recently released by Montrose after going through Dundee United's youth ranks and turning pro in 2003.

Gardiner made his Scottish Premier League debut for United against Inverness Caley in April 2006 but after failing to make an impact at senior level he was released in April 2007 and joined Montrose for the 07/08 season.

Gardiner's father John, a goalkeeper, played with former South Melbourne Hellas star George Campbell at Aberdeen in the 1970s and Campbell's recent trip to Scotland (reported last week in Goal! Weekly) led to Hennessy's interest in the defender.

Ross Gardiner looms as the perfect replacement for Aaron Wilford who signed with Bentleigh from Southern Stars only to switch to Premier League newcomer Dandenong Thunder shortly after.

"I wasn't going to stand in Aaron's way and we wish him all the best," said Hennessy. "I really rate him, in fact I think he could become one of the best central defenders in Premier League never mind First Division."

Robbie Acs has switched from Casey Comets to Bentleigh Greens where he will challenge Marijo Roza (signed from Westgate) for the number one goalkeeping spot. Photo: DARRYL KENNEDY.

Hennessy also has signed ex-Chelsea and Partick Thistle midfielder Andy Ross. Hennessy and Ross have previously linked up at Richmond, Kingston City and Southern Stars.

Two major midfield departures are that of Marcelo Pena and Mitch Pino. Pena and his family have returned to South America while Pino never reported back to training last December.

On the goalkeeping front, Hennessy has signed Robbie Acs from Casey Comets and Marijo Roza from Westgate. Another Westgate signing, Milan Savic, and Craig Smart from Frankston Pines will provide drive and guile in midfield while Smart's ex-Pines teammate, striker Craig Metcalfe, also has joined the Greens.

But the signings don't stop there. Hennessy also has snared the signature of Jimmy Latinopoulos (ex-Richmond and Kingston City) while striker Fikret Husanovic (from Fawkner) has returned to the club.

Adam Rudzki has followed Hennessy to Bentleigh from Southern Stars and will vie for the right-sided midfield slot with former Springvale White Eagles and Langwarrin winger Rados Tomic.

Promising youngster Andy Jerez, who broke his leg during his stint with Melbourne Victory's youth team, should be back in action by May as should energetic midfielder Bill Natsioulas, who has returned to the club from South Melbourne. Natsioulas is recovering from a knee reconstruction.

Knox City the brave

NEXT time you go to the Football Federation of Victoria website go to competition/leagues/rules and regulations and open the Men's Leagues pdf file then move to rule 3.12.

There, under the heading "National Flags, Slogans & Emblems" you can read six subclauses that represent the culmination of many years of forced assimilation. Consistently couched under less confronting terms what amounts to the ethnic cleansing of Australian soccer/football has proven, by two measures at least, spectacularly successful as we've seen in recent times with attendances at A-League and Socceroos matches and coverage throughout the electronic and print media.

And much of this during the beat of Frank Lowy, chairman of Football Federation Australia. That's the same Frank Lowy who arrived here in 1952 and opened his first shop, a deli opposite Blacktown railway station in Sydney's west and now is executive chairman and co-founder of Westfield and surely the richest Hungarian Jew to migrate to these shores.

Now back to the FFV website and the rules and regulations pdf. It takes little imagination to think of the prevalence of similar wording in Lowy's Soviet-dominated home country in the 1950s but I think this is 2009 and I find the current wording unsettling.

Then there's the issue of whether or not these words apply to all clubs under the FFV banner and how well the federation polices its own rules.

For the past few weekends I've watched pre-season games at Springvale White Eagles' Serbian Sports Centre (how on earth was the ground able to retain the name?) and seen Knox City strutting its stuff, resplendent in a strip that carries a St Andrew's Cross, the symbol of my home country Scotland.

Being a supporter and one-time member of the Scottish National Party (which may mean that the FFV media pass I received last week could be revoked, gulp) I say more power to Knox City but I wonder how Knox and many other clubs can breach the (albeit discriminatory) rules that ban use of non-Australian emblems.

I guess it's like the handful of clubs that condone the use of flares and the many clubs that sell alcohol in bottles and cans on matchdays rather than in plastic cups. Their motto seems to be if you can get away with it then go for it.

Dundee United for Stirton

TEENAGER David Stirton heads off to Tannadice in April to trial with Scottish Premier League outfit Dundee United.

Stirton, identified as a special talent by Rangers' Hall of Famer Bobby Russell during a coaching clinic in Melbourne in 2007, headed to Murray Park to trial with the Scottish giants late last year.

A lifelong Rangers fan whose father Iain had two seasons with the Ibrox outfit (in 1979/80 and 1980/81), the youngster's treatment at Rangers' state-of-the-art training complex can best be described as shabby.

Not so at Kilmarnock where he was welcomed with open arms and so impressed the Rugby Park coaching staff that the club invited him back towards the end of the current season.

During his time in Scotland contact was made with former Rangers and Hearts defender Dave McPherson, who represents Celtic and Socceroo star Scott McDonald among others, and McPherson has arranged the Dundee United trial.

McPherson and United manager Craig Levein are close friends from their playing days at Hearts and McPherson is convinced that the Tannadice outfit represents the best prospect for fast-tracking young Stirton's talents.

Why Vidmar was so pissed off

SOURCES close to the Adelaide United camp have thrown light on the well-publicised outburst a fortnight back by coach Aurelio Vidmar who famously referred to the South Australian capital as "a piss-ant town".

I understand that Vidmar's venom was directed at some United board members who had shown great interest a few days earlier in John Kosmina's intentions for the following season.

However, at least one of those board members allegedly went a step further and asked some players what they thought about possibly having Kosmina return to Adelaide United's coaching helm.

When Vidmar heard about the clandestine goings on he understandably was furious, especially so when his task was to maintain his players' focus on overturning a 2–0 deficit in the two-legged major semi-final against Melbourne Victory, a task that proved beyond them.

I'm not sure if Vidmar's use of "piss-ant" was intended to mirror conversations between then US president Lyndon B. Johnson and his advisers during the Vietnam War when LBJ often referred to Vietnam as "that damn piss-ant little country".

"Piss-ant" can also be used as an epithet for an inconsequential, irrelevant, or worthless person, especially one who is irritating or contemptible out of proportion to his or her significance.

It's that second use of the word that springs to mind as an apt description for board members wanting to boot out a coach that took his charges to the Asian Champions League final last November, in the process creating history for the game here at club level and firmly establishing Adelaide on the Asian sporting map.

Was Adelaide United coach Aurelio Vidmar reacting angrily to the spectre of John Kosmina returning to the South Australian club's coaching helm?

BOO'S WORLD

With Mark Boric

Another A-League Grand Final, another refereeing shocker. Still though they did not play a great game in the final, no one can deny Melbourne Victory were worthy champions in 2009-09 given they beat Adelaide around ten times and spanked them 6-0 in the semi over two legs.

Would it be ironic if a riot was started at a game because the replay of a controversial incident was NOT shown on the big screen? A bloke I was seated near, called Mirko, was threatening to start a such a riot. The day it happens is getting closer.

Ernie Merrick must be a genius. Winning the Grand Final with Nick Ward in your starting line-up sure is a tremendous feat.

Melbourne Victory paid $8.00 for a 1-0 win on TAB Sportsbet. Grant Brebner would have partied extra hard if he was on some of that, but given history his money may have been on Adelaide.

Does Pim Verbeek get a bonus from the FFA for his marvellous public relations work in promoting the A-League? He really should, suggesting players are better off playing in European reserves teams and calling it's leading marksmen "hopeless" does wonders for it's credibility.

Poor Pim seems to be copping plenty of criticism, even though he has just about achieved the goal of qualification for the World Cup. For mine anyone who thinks Robert Cornthwaite is national team material in any shape of form is more of a goose than a Guus.

It's a bit worrying that the VPL season has kicked off yet one club still has "To Be Confirmed" as it's venue. What a sad state of affairs it is. It's politics. Politics and hidden agendas. Because of a pissant mentality, this competition will never get anywhere! You know! You know!

Shame on Les Murray for his efforts at Telstra Dome/Etihad Stadium on Saturday. The SBS face of football seemed happy enough to pose with punters for photos, as long as they were female. That's sexism Les! You are better than that.

Note to the FFA. Melbourne Victory won the Grand Final, not Sydney FC. Play the proper version of "We Are The Champions" for us, and the gay version for them, should they ever win it again. Thanks.

Tsigan: GW's Ambassador for Football hams it up with the masses cicra 2007.

Ben Buckley. Archie Fraser. Do the AFL have a good office cleaner the FFA can poach as well?

Have we at Goal! Weekly lost Tsigan? Forever? I have heard he has left us to become a pastor. Or was it to get some pasta? Either way I will miss him.

KATSA'S KORNER

With George Katsamboukas

This weeks Katsas Korner will have a slight A-League tinge to it as….

Ernie's Boys experienced their second Happy End in 4 years and are now A-League Champions for Season 2008/09.

However, their victory, (pardon the pun), may feel as hollow as a punter scoring a Happy End at their local Over 28's with a fair maiden who has played and lost with a bottle of Vodka, as one Man in Black, in this instance Man In Yellow, M Breeze, placed Adelaide United behind the eight ball early on in the piece, having sent off Adelaide United's Christiano after 10 minutes of play, following a very dubious heading dual with Rodrigo Vargas.

My take on it is that there was nothing in it as both Christiano and Vargas jumped for a Header, and Christiano's contact to Vargas' scone was unintentional.

Now the Good Men In Black will have us all believe that elbows and hands should be kept down when performing the act of Heading,(minds out of the gutters please), however it is near on impossible to jump to head a ball without the use of one's arms and elbows.

Without taking anything away from Tommy Tom Pondeljak who took out the Joe Marston Medal, awarded to the Man of the Match, referee Mathew Breeze should feel a touch hard done by that he did not take out this prestigious award, as his performance certainly influenced the outcome of the match.

Such a dubious decision so early on in the piece of a Grand Final not only kills it a spectacle for the Fans, but takes the gloss of the team that wins it.

Not for the first time the man in the middle makes a whopper of a decision which takes a huge bearing on the outcome of Australia's showpiece match on the local football calender. Inset: The original Whopper yesterday.

Take nothing away from Ernie's boys though, they still took care of Business and won the Grand Final, as well as finishing in top spot after the Home and Away Series.

As I sat down to watch the Grand Final, I also had with me a Dictionary and Thesaurus, as I believed that Foxtel's Andy Harper would be doing the commentary.

I also postponed my meeting with J Walker as I needed to be fully alert so as to look up some of Andy's words and terms. This wasn't to be though as Harp's missed out on the commentary and was saved for the post match reviews.

Do you have a function organised, where there will be potentially more people attending than the venue will hold?

Problem solved, call Aurelio Vidmar to solve the problem for you.

His comments two weeks ago after Adelaide United's loss to the Victory may have been the reason for the poor attendance for last week's Preliminary Final against Frankie's Queensland Roar.
They say people vote with their feet…
PS Viddy, what does the term Pissant mean?

Back to the Grand Final we go where Katsa developed Brebneritis just before kick off, so he visited his trusted Internet Betting Site and plonked a tidy amount on Adelaide United.

Reason for selection?

The tide had to turn sooner or later for Adelaide against the Victory and $4.85 for an Adelaide win for a two horse race was rather tempting.

It was not to be though, what do they say about a fool and his money?

From the big stage, to the not so big stage we go, where…

Round 1 of the Foxtel Cup kicked of, and what a big Friday Night of Soccer it was.

Jack's Place was buzzing on Friday night for the Cannons' clash with the Bergers.

The Blue Boys started the season of with a bang, putting 4 past the Bergers, whilst over in Boo Land, the Richmond Boys started off on the right foot, slipping three past Whittlesea.

The interesting unreported stats from this game though are: How many Balls went on to Monash Freeway? How many were recovered? And more importantly, was Black Forest Cake plus Cream available at half time?

Until next week
This is Katsa – 700 Games – Hard Games!
And remember, there is no such thing as a Bad Dim Sim!

Coach's Casualty List

Last Year	This Year
1 - 0	1 - 0
Weeks Outs	Weeks Outs

'BORO BURY REDS' HOPES

EPL Title Is United's To Lose

European league football is fast approaching its climax with title deciding matches occurring left right and centre at this late stage of the season.
Goal! Weekly reporter Julius Ross checks out the action from Europe's top leagues and examines where the respective league titles could be heading.

LIVERPOOL SLIP HANDS UNITED TITLE?

Liverpool's hopes of clinching the English Premier League title from the grasp of their fierce rivals Manchester United appear all but over as they slumped to their second defeat of the season on Saturday.
Middlesbrough inflicted the painful result on the Merseyside club, with Xabi Alonso netting a disastrous own-goal and Turkish star Tuncay adding a second to give Boro a 2-0 victory at the Riverside Stadium.
It is quite extraordinary that a side, which has lost only twice all season, can be ruled out of the title race with 11 matches still to play; however, Rafa Benitez' side has drawn far too many matches, 10 from 27.
Further, the Reds have faltered since Christmas, while defending Champions United have gone from strength to strength to record a 10-match winning streak which has seen them not only overtake the Anfield club at the top of the table, but register a seemingly unassailable seven-point lead.
Chelsea made the most of Liverpool's slip up, leap-frogging the Reds into second place, courtesy of a 2-1 win at **Wigan**.
Now equal on 55 points with Liverpool, but ahead on goal-difference, the Blues recorded victory through goals from stalwarts John Terry – with a terrific volley – and Frank Lampard with a last-gasp winner against the Latics.
Arsenal's guns have appeared to stop firing, as they were booed off the pitch by their fans at the Emirates Stadium after a fourth successive 0-0 draw in the Premier League.
This latest goalless draw came against London rivals **Fulham**, with Robin van Persie's header, which grazed the post, the closest chance for the Gunners who are having a quite miserable season.
In Saturday's final fixture, Everton's Australian star Tim Cahill scored a trademark header, and injury-jinxed Louis Saha turned back the years to net a sublime second to give the Toffees a 2-0 win against **West Brom** at Goodison Park.

CELTIC IN SEVENTH HEAVEN

In Scotland, Celtic recorded a remarkable 7-0 demolition of 10-man St Mirren, with Japanese midfielder Shunsuke Nakamura hitting a hat-trick, to close the gap at the top of the Scottish Premier League to a mere four goals.
Both **Celtic** and **Rangers** have recorded the same number of wins, draws and losses throughout the season, with the Glasgow sides winning 18, losing three and drawing six apiece; however, Rangers lead via a superior goal difference - +38, in comparison with +34.
However, the Hoops' 7-0 drubbing of St Mirren has gone a long way towards closing this gap between their title rivals, thanks to Nakamura's hat-trick, a Scott Brown brace, a first goal for Spanish midfielder Marc Crosas and an own-goal from John Potter.
St Mirren's nightmare afternoon commenced when defender Jack Ross was given his marching orders for a foul on Australian Scott McDonald, leaving gaps in the Buddies' defence, and Celtic with a numerical advantage.
Rangers had done the business earlier that day, with striker Barry Ferguson claiming his first goal of the season – and first since May last year – to give Rangers a small amount of breathing space at the top of the League, prior to Celtic's rampant victory against St Mirren.
Elsewhere, **Hibernian** and **Falkirk** battled out a 0-0 draw, **Aberdeen** and **Kilmarnock** settled for the same score line, **Motherwell** recorded a 2-1 away victory over bottom-placed **Inverness**, and fourth-placed **Dundee United** lost at home to third-placed **Heart of Midlothian**.

Tuncay Sanli during their English Premier league football match at The Riverside Stadium, in Middlesbrough. Liverpool´s fading title hopes suffered a major blow as they slumped to a shock 2-0 defeat at the hands of Premier League strugglers Middlesbrough.

REAL CHANCE AS MADRID CLOSES GAP TO FOUR POINTS

The Spanish La Liga title race has been blown wide open, with second-placed Real Madrid closing the gap on title rivals Barcelona after a 2-0 win away at struggling Espanyol.
It was the reigning Champions' 10th consecutive league win – a winning-streak which has helped Madrid whittle league leader Barcelona's previous 12 point lead at the top to just four – with the Catalans only managing one point from their last two matches.
Meanwhile, a Frederic Kanoute double has given **Seville** a comeback victory over **Athletic Bilbao**, and a six point cushion in third position.

JUVE CLOSE CAP ON INTER

In Italy, Claudio Ranieri's Juventus bounced back from their midweek Champions League defeat at the hands of Chelsea, to record a 1-0 victory over Napoli.
Ranieri fielded an attacking line up with Allessandro del Piero and David Trezeguet partnered in attack for the first time this season, and the Bianconeri took a 44th minute lead through Claudio Marchisio to lift Juve to within six points of Serie A leaders Inter Milan, who played Roma on Sunday night.
In the Italian Capital, **Lazio** recorded their first win at the Stadio Olimpico since December last year, with a 2-0 victory over relegation-threatened **Bologna**.
Argentinean Mauro Zarate chipped in with a brace to push his side into seventh spot on the table, and back in the hunt for European football, while Bologna sit in a precarious position; one point clear of the relegation zone.

TITLE RACE WIDE OPEN IN DEUTSCHLAND

With only five points separating first from fourth, the Bundesliga may provide the most the exciting finish in Europe this season.
Hertha Berlin currently hold supremacy on 43 points, after they returned to the top of the table with a 2-1 win over **Borussia Moenchengladbach.**
Hamburg SV, who played on Sunday, trail Berlin by a point, while German minnows **Hoffenheim** – in their first season in the top flight – trail by two points after slipping from first to third after going four matches without a win, including a lacklustre 0-0 against **Borussia Dortmund** on Saturday.
Champion **Bayern Munich** rounds out the top four, and the German giants had the chance to close the gap in Sunday's fixture against **Werder Bremen.**

EPL STANDINGS

	P	GD	PTS
1 Manchester United	26	+35	62
2 Chelsea	27	+31	55
3 Liverpool	27	+23	55
4 Aston Villa	26	+15	51
5 Arsenal	27	+13	46
6 Everton	27	+8	44
7 Wigan Athletic	27	+1	35
8 Fulham	26	+2	34
9 West Ham United	26	-2	33
10 Manchester City	26	+8	32
11 Sunderland	26	-6	31
12 Bolton Wanderers	26	-9	30
13 Hull City	26	-16	29
14 Tottenham Hotspur	26	-4	28
15 Newcastle United	26	-9	28
16 Portsmouth	26	-14	28
17 Middlesbrough	27	-16	26
18 Stoke City	26	-19	25
19 Blackburn Rovers	25	-14	23
20 West Brom Albion	27	-27	22

BUNDESLIGA

	P	GD	PTS
1 Hertha BSC	22	+9	43
2 Hamburger SV	21	+5	42
3 Hoffenheim	22	+18	41
4 Bayern München	21	+14	38
5 VfL Wolfsburg	21	+15	36
6 Bayer Leverkusen	22	+14	36
7 Schalke 04	22	+8	34
8 VfB Stuttgart	21	+7	33
9 Borussia Dortmund	22	+6	33
10 1. FC Köln	22	-5	29
11 Werder Bremen	21	+8	27
12 Hannover 96	22	-13	24
13 Eintracht Frankfurt	22	-9	23
14 VfL Bochum	22	-9	21
15 Arminia Bielefeld	22	-13	20
16 Energie Cottbus	22	-17	20
17 Karlsruher SC	21	-19	17
18 Borussia M'gladbach	22	-19	16

SPL STANDINGS

	P	GD	PTS
1 Rangers FC	27	+38	60
2 Celtic FC	27	+34	60
3 Heart of Midlothian	27	+1	45
4 Dundee United FC	27	+2	40

SERIE A STANDINGS

	P	GD	PTS
1 Inter Milan	25	+26	59
2 Juventus	26	+21	53
3 AC Milan	25	+17	48
4 Fiorentina	25	+13	45
5 Genoa	25	+11	44
6 AS Roma	25	+6	43
7 Lazio Roma	26	+0	38
8 Cagliari	25	+5	37
9 Atalanta	25	+5	36
10 Palermo	25	+1	36
11 Napoli	26	+2	35
12 Udinese	25	-3	31
13 Catania	25	-6	30
14 Sampdoria	25	-5	29
15 Siena	25	-7	27
16 Torino	25	-14	23
17 Bologna	26	-15	23
18 Lecce	25	-17	22
19 Verona	25	-17	20
20 Reggina	25	-23	17

By Julius Ross

Photos by Soccer Way

CAPITAL GAINS?

Verbeek's Domestic 'Roos To Confront Kuwaiti Challenge In Canberra

Socceroos coach Pim Verbeek has placed confidence in an exclusively domestic but relatively inexperienced squad to secure his team's first victory of the 2011 AFC Asian Cup qualifying campaign against Kuwait this Thursday.

The Dutch maestro has restored faith in local talent for Australia's second qualifying match against the Kuwaitis, despite a disappointing showing by his home-grown side in their first Group B encounter against Indonesia last month, which ended in a stagnant 0-0 draw.

Verbeek will be hoping for a more promising and positive display from his 24-man squad on home soil this week, which is assembled from players from six of eight A-League sides; Melbourne Victory, Adelaide United, Central Coast Mariners, Queensland Roar, Newcastle Jets and Sydney FC.

Despite opting for a comparatively unchanged squad from the clash with Indonesia, Verbeek's selection preferences for this encounter have echoed a change in direction, with four players receiving their first senior call-up.

This suggests that Verbeek may be utilising the Asian Cup qualifying matches to sharpen the next generation of Australian players, with youngster Ben Kantarovski from Newcastle Jets, Queensland Roar's Mitch Nichols, and Adelaide United duo Fabian Barbiero and Daniel Mullen all awarded a debut place in the squad.

It will be interesting to see whether Verbeek will present these youngsters with a Socceroo cap and – more importantly – a chance to show their abilities against Kuwait.

Those fans fearing that the Socceroos may be lacking experience will be relaxed somewhat with the news that Queensland Roar stalwart Craig Moore – whose 42 international caps make him the most experienced player in the squad – will captain the side and be on hand to nurture these future stars.

Moore will be joined on the 'experienced' list by Melbourne Victory forward Archie Thompson who has donned the green and gold on 31 occasions; however the next experienced squad member is Thompson's fellow Victory teammate – and 2009 A-League Grand Final hero – Tom Pondeljak who has received just five first team caps for the 'Roos.

The selection of a domestic squad is almost certainly a result of the unavailability of European and overseas-based players, as Verbeek has, in the past, openly voiced his opinion that he would prefer to select players playing at the highest level.

On this occasion he has had to settle for local talent, but Verbeek's "say it like it is" attitude has revealed his inferior view of the A-League, in comparison with European leagues.

The 'A-League' Socceroos will have to improve on their last AFC Asian Cup qualifying match if they are to take their first three points of the campaign.

Pim's anyone?: Pim Verbeek has decided to go with a local brew in the quest for Asia Cup 2011 qualification. Hopefully he'll be the toast of the capital come Thursday against Gulf side, Kuwait.

The team struggled against Indonesia on a hot and humid night in Jakarta, with Melbourne Victory strike partners Danny Allsopp and Thompson controversially labelled in a press conference by Verbeek as "absolutely hopeless" in that particular match – comments which have seen sparks fly between players, coach and the Australian media.

Kuwait will be no easy beats, despite the Gulf side also failing to impress in their opening fixture, with the team losing 1-0 to Group B leaders Oman.

In an attempt to avoid defeat on Australian turf, Kuwait has undergone intense preparation for the upcoming Asian Cup clash, taking part in a number of recently friendly matches in New Zealand.

Across the Tasman, the Kuwaitis have looked the part, defeating club sides Auckland City 2-0 and Waitakere United 2-1 in confidence boosting encounters.

Kuwaiti striker Badr Al Mutawa has hit top form against Kiwi opposition, contributing two goals from two matches and Fahd Al Rashidi has also shone, particularly in their side's inspiring victory against Auckland City, and the pair may be a handful in Canberra.

Canberra Stadium will be an interesting venue for the Socceroos, who may find it as foreign as their visitors; the home side having last played in the stadium back in November 1996 in an Oceania Cup match against Tahiti.

The match in the Capital city may also be a great opportunity for Canberra to demonstrate its support for the Socceroos in an important Asian Cup qualifier and a large crowd on Thursday may well send a strong message to Football Federation Australia that Canberra is serious about having an A-League side.

An Australian victory may see Verbeek's side leapfrog both Indonesia and Oman into first place after two matches, with the top two teams progressing to the AFC Asian Cup 2011 when the qualification process concludes.

Oman are the current leaders of Group B with four points, followed by Indonesia (two), Australia (one) with Kuwait yet to open their account.

Australia's 24-man Squad (By A-League Club)

Melbourne Victory
Danny Allsopp, Billy Celeski, Tom Pondeljak, Michael Theoklitos, Rodrigo Vargas, Archie Thompson

Newcastle Jets
Ben Kantarovski, Tarek Elrich, Matthew Thompson, Nikolai Topor-Stanley

Adelaide United
Fabian Barbiero, Robert Cornthwaite, Eugene Galekovic, Scott Jamieson, Daniel Mullen, Paul Reid

Sydney FC
Shannon Cole

Central Coast Mariners
Dean Heffernan, Matt Simon, Danny Vukovic

Queensland Roar
Matthew McKay, Craig Moore (c), Mitch Nichols, Michael Zullo

GROUP A

	P	W	D	L	F	A	+/-	Pts
BAHRAIN	2	2	0	0	4	1	3	6
JAPAN	2	1	0	1	2	2	0	3
YEMEN	2	1	0	1	2	2	0	3
HONG KONG	2	0	0	2	1	4	-3	0

GROUP B

	P	W	D	L	F	A	+/-	Pts
OMAN	2	1	1	0	1	0	1	4
INDONESIA	2	0	2	0	0	0	0	2
AUSTRALIA	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
KUWAIT	1	0	0	1	0	1	-1	0

GROUP C

	P	W	D	L	F	A	+/-	Pts
UAE	2	1	0	1	5	1	4	3
UZBEKISTAN	1	1	0	0	1	0	1	3
MALAYSIA	1	0	0	1	0	5	-5	0

GROUP D

	P	W	D	L	F	A	+/-	Pts
SYRIA	2	2	0	0	5	2	3	6
CHINA P.R.	2	1	0	1	8	4	4	3
VIETNAM	2	1	0	1	4	7	-3	3
LEBANON	2	0	0	2	1	5	-4	0

GROUP E

	P	W	D	L	F	A	+/-	Pts
I.R. IRAN	2	1	1	0	6	0	6	4
SINGAPORE	2	1	0	1	2	7	-5	3
THAILAND	2	0	2	0	0	0	0	2
JORDAN	2	0	1	1	1	2	-1	1

THE ROAD TO QATAR

19 Jan 2009 OMAN - INDONESIA 0:0
28 Jan 2009 INDONESIA - AUST 0:0
28 Jan 2009 KUWAIT - OMAN 0:1
5 Mar 2009 AUSTRALIA - KUWAIT
14 Nov 2009 AUSTRALIA - OMAN
14 Nov 2009 KUWAIT - INDONESIA
18 Nov 2009 OMAN - AUSTRALIA
18 Nov 2009 INDONESIA - KUWAIT
6 Jan 2010 INDONESIA - OMAN
6 Jan 2010 KUWAIT - AUSTRALIA
3 Mar 2010 OMAN - KUWAIT
3 Mar 2010 AUSTRALIA - INDONESIA

ASIAN CUP
Australia v Kuwait
Thursday 5 March
Fox Sports 1 7pm (KO 8pm)

By Julius Ross
Asia Cup Correspondent

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SUMMER CUP HEATS UP!

Clarence United and Tilford Zebras in Cup Final

Clarence United are in the southern Tasmanian Summer Cup Final on 9 March for the first time in the club's history.

They will meet the holders, Tilford Zebras, who reached the final by virtue of having scored one goal more than South Hobart.

Zebras and South Hobart both had a goal-difference of plus 6, but the Zebras' 6-0 win over New Town Eagles meant they had scored one goal more than South Hobart.

South Hobart threw away the chance of playing in the final when they were held to a goalless draw by Hobart Olympic, who then earned the bonus point by winning the resulting penalty shoot-out 4-2.

Clarence dominated their game against University and ran out 3-0 winners, but only after a scoreless opening half.

In the second period, atrocious defending by University gifted the match to Clarence, two of the goals coming from set-pieces.

Luke Cripps netted the first following a corner, but he knew little about it, the ball deflecting off him and into the net.

Julian McMahon headed the second from a high, looping cross from the left by Ben Hamlett, while Ben Parker forced Ben Phillips's corner into the net for the third.

Clarence keeper Michael Moschogianis touched the ball only five times during the course of the game and two of those touches were from goal-kicks.

South Hobart and Hobart Olympic drew 0-0, although South's Shae Hickey and Hugh Ludford both hit the woodwork.

Summer Cup finalists Clarence United...the starting XI for the game against University.

Olympic's goalkeeper, Dmitri Nester, was the hero of the penalty shoot-out, scoring from a spot-kick himself and saving penalties from South's Ludford and Greg Downes.

Only Bart Beecroft and Jonathon Ladic scored for South, while Olympic's Michael Bulis, Chris Tsakiris, Nester, and Danijel Djekanovic were successful.

Zebras went into their match with New Town Eagles needing to win by six clear goals to pip South for a berth in the final.

They started like wildfire, but squandered four chances in the opening few minutes.

With Zebras going full speed ahead, Eagles found the time and space to launch dangerous counter-attacks and should have scored twice from these.

But, it was Zebras who got off the mark in the 10th minute when youngster Braydon Pace headed in Andrew Telega's cross from the right.

In the 17th minute, Pace's fine pass found Ben Crosswell, who beat Andrew Savage to make it 2-0 at the break.

It was not until midway through the second half that Josh Thorpe added the third with a long-range shot. Savage got a hand to the ball but could not keep it out of the top corner.

With two minutes remaining, Crosswell made it 4-0 with a penalty, awarded when he was brought down by Barry Pope.

It was still 4-0 going into stoppage time and Zebras appeared to have blown their chance, but two goals in four minutes produced the miracle.

First, Crosswell completed his hat-trick with a superb low drive to make it 5-0, and in the 4th minute of stoppage time, Pace headed home Aaron Brazendale's cross from the right to send the Zebras supporters into raptures.

In the other game of the weekend, a 21st-minute lob by captain Josh Fielding gave Glenorchy Knights a 1-0 win over Kingborough Lions United.

By Walter Pless

Photos by Walter Pless

CHANGES APLENTY AS NSWPL KICKS OFF

Okon To Coach Tigers, Wollongong Saved At The Death

The TeleChoice NSW Premier League kicks off for 2009 on March 1, with several clubs under new coaches, and a couple sporting new names as well.

Last year's champions **Wollongong FC** have endured a turbulent off-season, during which the club endured a financial collapse which threatened its continued participation in the competition. The Illawarra community rallied around the club, however, and a new entity, the Wollongong Community Football Club, will be taking part in the 2009 NSW Premier League. Last year's assistant coach Tony Pace will be in charge, and although the men from the south have lost talismanic striker Osagie Ederaro and key midfielder Michael Hawrysiuk, they have enough experience and talent in their ranks to mount a decent challenge. Nevertheless, the motivational gifts of long-time coach John Turner will be missed.

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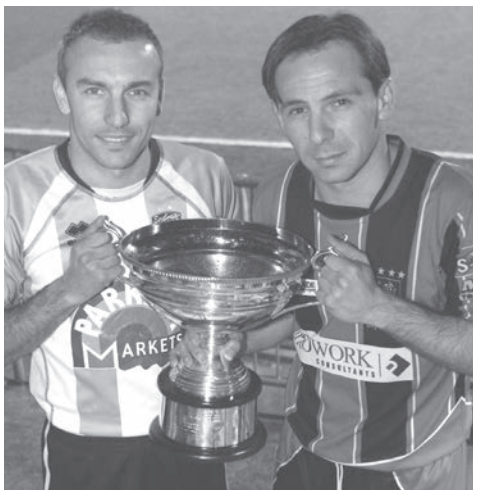

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By Mike Salter

Photos by FNSW

SUMMER CUP HEATS UP!

Clarence United and Tilford Zebras in Cup Final

Clarence United are in the southern Tasmanian Summer Cup Final on 9 March for the first time in the club's history.

They will meet the holders, Tilford Zebras, who reached the final by virtue of having scored one goal more than South Hobart.

Zebras and South Hobart both had a goal-difference of plus 6, but the Zebras' 6-0 win over New Town Eagles meant they had scored one goal more than South Hobart.

South Hobart threw away the chance of playing in the final when they were held to a goalless draw by Hobart Olympic, who then earned the bonus point by winning the resulting penalty shoot-out 4-2.

Clarence dominated their game against University and ran out 3-0 winners, but only after a scoreless opening half.

In the second period, atrocious defending by University gifted the match to Clarence, two of the goals coming from set-pieces.

Luke Cripps netted the first following a corner, but he knew little about it, the ball deflecting off him and into the net.

Julian McMahon headed the second from a high, looping cross from the left by Ben Hamlett, while Ben Parker forced Ben Phillips's corner into the net for the third.

Clarence keeper Michael Moschogianis touched the ball only five times during the course of the game and two of those touches were from goal-kicks.

South Hobart and Hobart Olympic drew 0-0, although South's Shae Hickey and Hugh Ludford both hit the woodwork.

Summer Cup finalists Clarence United...the starting XI for the game against University.

Olympic's goalkeeper, Dmitri Nester, was the hero of the penalty shoot-out, scoring from a spot-kick himself and saving penalties from South's Ludford and Greg Downes.

Only Bart Beecroft and Jonathon Ladic scored for South, while Olympic's Michael Bulis, Chris Tsakiris, Nester, and Danijel Djekanovic were successful.

Zebras went into their match with New Town Eagles needing to win by six clear goals to pip South for a berth in the final.

They started like wildfire, but squandered four chances in the opening few minutes.

With Zebras going full speed ahead, Eagles found the time and space to launch dangerous counter-attacks and should have scored twice from these.

But, it was Zebras who got off the mark in the 10th minute when youngster Braydon Pace headed in Andrew Telega's cross from the right.

In the 17th minute, Pace's fine pass found Ben Crosswell, who beat Andrew Savage to make it 2-0 at the break.

It was not until midway through the second half that Josh Thorpe added the third with a long-range shot. Savage got a hand to the ball but could not keep it out of the top corner.

With two minutes remaining, Crosswell made it 4-0 with a penalty, awarded when he was brought down by Barry Pope.

It was still 4-0 going into stoppage time and Zebras appeared to have blown their chance, but two goals in four minutes produced the miracle.

First, Crosswell completed his hat-trick with a superb low drive to make it 5-0, and in the 4th minute of stoppage time, Pace headed home Aaron Brazendale's cross from the right to send the Zebras supporters into raptures.

In the other game of the weekend, a 21st-minute lob by captain Josh Fielding gave Glenorchy Knights a 1-0 win over Kingborough Lions United.

By Walter Pless

Photos by Walter Pless

CHANGES APLENTY AS NSWPL KICKS OFF

Okon To Coach Tigers, Wollongong Saved At The Death

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Last year's champions **Wollongong FC** have endured a turbulent off-season, during which the club endured a financial collapse which threatened its continued participation in the competition. The Illawarra community rallied around the club, however, and a new entity, the Wollongong Community Football Club, will be taking part in the 2009 NSW Premier League. Last year's assistant coach Tony Pace will be in charge, and although the men from the south have lost talismanic striker Osagie Ederaro and key midfielder Michael Hawrysiuk, they have enough experience and talent in their ranks to mount a decent challenge. Nevertheless, the motivational gifts of long-time coach John Turner will be missed.

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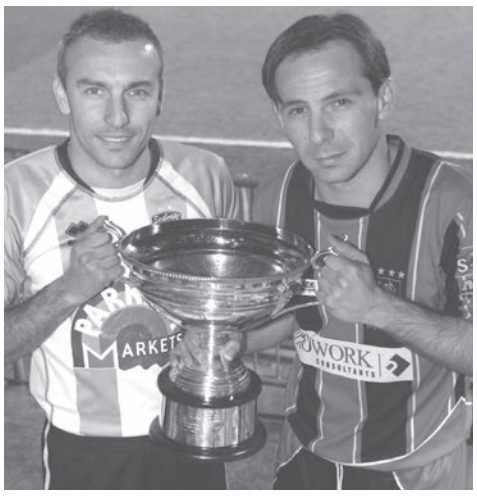

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By Mike Salter

Photos by FNSW

CAMPBELLTOWN WINS FAIRMONT HOMES CUP

On Friday 20th February Campbelltown City Red Devils played out of their skins in their 3-0 victory to beat front-runners MetroStars in the Grand Final of the 2009 Fairmont Homes Summer Night Series at the Marden Sports Complex. Spectators were witness to a display of face-paced, top quality football from both of the eastern suburbs neighbours, the Red Devils capitalising on their opportunities with three great goals coming from Stanko Zilic, new signing Michael Paleka and classy midfielder Dominic Signoriello.

The annual competition is held in the month of February where 8 invitational teams compete in two groups with 2 games being played every Wednesday and Friday evenings. This years competitors were hosts Adelaide Blue Eagles, Campbelltown City, newly promoted Super League team Western Strikers and State League Top Five trophy winners West Adelaide in Group A; and MetroStars, Para Hills Knights, Premier League competitors Cumberland United and State League Club NAB in Group B. The semi finals saw Campbelltown taking out the Group A title over Para Hills Knights with a strong 2-0 win and MetroStars coming away with a 3-0 win over Blue Eagles In the Group A competition in a scoreless game that went to penalties, with Stars keeper Daniel Godley making 3 Schwarzer-like saves to give his side the outright victory.

Throughout the competition MetroStars coached by Michael Barnett looked the team to beat, the nucleus of the 2008 squad being retained and their defence being bolstered by new signing Adam Van Dommele (ex-Adelaide United). But Campbelltown City made their intent known from the start of the final, a tad lucky they were not two or three goals down within the first 10 minutes as MetroStars squandered numerous scoring opportunities in a flurry of missed chances by their forwards in front of goal. Rocky Aloisi's Red Devils then settled down to produce some great football, their one-twos and passages of play forward finding their men and at times, dazing the normally rock-solid back line of MetroStars. The first goal came early in the game Zilic scoring with a 25m shot that was hit low and hard leaving Stars keeper Godley with no chance. At the 20th minute mark, a freekick taken by the Devils captain Simon Catanzaro - a deadball specialist found the head of Paleka, the newcomer making no mistake pounding the back of the net for the Devils second. Campbelltown's new signing Vas Parhas (Cumberland United) and promoted young Devil Peter Sapa looked exciting prospects for the club this season, their strength in the back making a big impact on the game. Triple Sergio Melta Medal winner Simon Catanzaro led by example with a brilliant display of his expertise in the midfield, instigating many runs forward and executing pin point passes to his men up front; Trimboli and Paleka. Although the match was quite an even affair, ebbing and flowing throughout the 90 minutes, Campbelltown were more effective with the ball and their passing. MetroStars did get themselves back into the game at one stage, luck not being on the side of strikers Michael Mattriciani and Scott Tunbridge as they were unable to convert chances that were presented, finding the post and Devils keeper Scalzi hard to beat. In the second half MetroStars again tried to peg back the 2 goal deficit, but missed opportunities were again their downfall, with sSome wayward passing and a steadfast Devil's backline led by staunch defender Michael D'Alosio all standing in their way. Campbelltown then put the nail in the coffin late in the second half with their third goal coming from dynamic wingman Dominic Signoriello taking a solo run down the left side past three MetroStars players finishing with a left footed shot that drilled past Godley in the 81st minute, much to the delight of the Campbelltown City faithful.

2009 Red Devils Captain Simon Catanzaro was delighted with the title win, "I was proud to lead the club to its first trophy up for grabs in 2009 against South Australia's strongest team. We rode our luck in the first 5 minutes then took our chances the rest of the game. This will be a stepping stone for the club to have its most successful season in recent time. Personally I have had some very good results over the past few seasons, picking up the Sergio Melta Medal for Super League's Player of the Year in 2005, 2006 and 2008 and am very grateful. But what I really want is some silverware to put into the trophy cabinet of one of South Australia's biggest clubs Campbelltown City.

By Nat Adamopoulos
In Adelaide

OKON'S TIGERS SHOW THEIR TEETH

Paul Okon's Sydney Tigers, formerly APIA-Leichhardt, gave notice of their intentions by posting a first-up 5-1 win over competition newcomers Bonnyrigg as the NSW Premier League kicked off on Sunday.

Champions Wollongong went down 1-0 at Bankstown City, while last season's premiers Sutherland were held to a 0-0 draw by hosts Manly at Cromer Park. Sydney United had an excellent start to the season, downing Blacktown 3-0 away, while Marconi started off with a 2-0 win over near neighbours Penrith-Nepean United.

Sydney Olympic 1-3 West Sydney Berries

In a repeat of last season, the first round's "Greek derby" was taken out by the West Sydney Berries, who disposed of Sydney Olympic 3-1 at Belmore.

Olympic, coming out of the blocks quickly, had the better of the opening minutes. Emmanuel Zunino, up from left-back, had a half-chance in the second minute, and soon afterwards Matthew Mayora cut in from the left and shot wide with his right foot.

Completely against the run of play, the Beries opened the scoring in the ninth minute. The away side were awarded a free kick twenty-five yards from goal, and Aheleas Kotsopoulos sent in a scorching free kick which flew into the far corner of the goal, leaving Michael Turnbull with no chance.

Olympic were stunned, and although they maintained their territorial dominance for the remainder of the half, they created few chances. Kotsopoulos almost made it two a few minutes after the goal when Liam Austin released him on the right, but this time Turnbull was there to cover.

Zunino, still rusty after his period overseas, was getting caught out on the Olympic left with some regularity. Kosta Lagoudakis and Austin both had chances on that side of the pitch as the half drew to a close, and although Mayora carved out another chance for himself on 43 minutes, shooting wide from close range, it was the Berries who went further ahead just before the break. Omar Saadi broke forward from left-back and sent a fine cross over to Austin on the right, who evaded Zunino and sent a precise right-footed volley beyond Turnbull. Tolgay Ozbey, who had been shackled well by the Berries defence, finally found space on the right in injury time, but fired into the side netting.

Adam Biddle came on for Olympic at the half, replacing young right-back David Smith, and immediately went on a run down the right which produced a half-chance for Mayora. Another Olympic substitution followed a few minutes into the half, club hero Peter Zorbas replacing the out-of-sorts Zunino. Kostopoulos threatened to score again when he latched on to a loose ball from Bobby Dragas on 56 minutes, but he contrived to shoot straight at Turnbull. Just after the hour, Biddle played Ozbey in on the right nicely; sprinting past his defender, the former Blacktown star went down in the box… and was booked for diving.

The frustration continued for the home side when a snap-shot from Mayora was held by Hamish McLean on 63 minutes, but Ozbey pulled a goal back unexpectedly on 68 minutes, when a right-footed free kick from a tight angle evaded McLean and flew into the far corner. But the Berries restored their two-goal buffer immediately, when a cross from the right was met by a ferocious right-footed half-volley from Dimitri Zakilas, which rocketed past Turnbull for the Berries' third.

The dismissal of Peter Peralta for a second bookable offence on 70 minutes revived the home side, and on 77 minutes there arrived a glimmer of hope when Ozbey again went down in the box, and this time a penalty was indeed awarded. Called back for encroachment on the first attempt, which found its mark, Ozbey fired into McLean's body on the second try.

Another searing left-foot shot from Ozbey was saved on 81 minutes, as the home side pressed on grimly. A long-range shot from Zorbas flew just over four minutes from time, and a tempting Biddle cross was mis-controlled by Jordan Simpson as the minutes ticked away. In the final minute of normal time, substitute Anthony Doumains's curling left-footer was saved brilliantly by McLean. At the other end, Berries substitute James Kovas made room for a shot in the area, but Turnbull was not troubled.

The whistle went, and all Olympic's second-half pressure was to no avail. A terrible start for the competition favourites.

By Mike Salter
In Sydney

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QUEENSLAND KICKS OFF!

Sunshine State Comp Prepares To Shine In '09

2009 sees the return of the Hyundai QSL after a successful inaugural season in 2008, which saw Sunshine Coast FC crowned as both minor premiers and champions.

Originally launched with ten clubs, the league has sought to capitalise on its relative success with the introduction of an eleventh team to the competition for the new season, the Far North Queensland Bulls, playing out of Mareeba.

As with any sports league sponsorship is an important element of the financial side of the QSL and the new season has seen a host of organisations sign up in support of the league. Hyundai will continue to be the league naming rights sponsor for a further three years whilst the Whitsunday Miners, FNQ Bulls and NQ Razorbacks have reached major agreements with Sea FM, Gorilla and McDonalds respectively.

The 2009/2010 season is shaping up to be just as competitive as the last on the pitch, with most clubs keeping their squad together. Sunshine Coast, Brisbane Strikers and NQ Razorbacks are the competition heavyweights and are once again expected to battle it out for the premiership, whilst Redlands City Devils are most supporters pick for the dark horse. It won't be smooth sailing for the favourites though as several of the lower placed sides have pulled off some exciting signings, notably Logan United FC and Bundaberg Spirit.

Brisbane Strikers FC

2008 – 2nd
Coach – Stuart McLaren
Captain – Matt Smith
Player to Watch – Adam Sarota

Brisbane Strikers enjoyed a successful 2008, establishing themselves as a powerhouse in the inaugural QSL competition. The club is aiming to go one better in 2009 with star midfielder Chay Hews expressing their confidence, "The squad is looking a bit stronger", he said. "Stuart has brought in a couple of good experienced players and a couple of younger players who are looking good".

Bundaberg Spirit

2008 – 10th
Coach – Lynn Hodgkinson
Captain – N/A
Player to Watch – James Naka

Bundaberg had a year to forget in 2008, struggling with the level of competition and registering both the worst attack and worst defence of the division. Despite this the team brought in the highest average crowds and hopefully this will be able to push the side higher up the table this season. The club has taken a step to move in the right direction by signing 2008 Oceania Football Confederation Player of the Year James Nakka from Kossa FC.

Sunshine Coast FC will be hoping to continue its dominance of the QSL this year after completing the domestic double last season.

Capricorn Cougars

2008 – 7th
Coach – Justin Kilshaw
Captain – Dylan Kussrow
Player to Watch – Gerard Kelly

The Cougars completed a promising season in 2008 with one of the better defences in the league, much of that owing to inspirational keeper Gerard Kelly. Improvement in attack will be essential to an improved league finish and young local product Jesse Thompson will be hoping to form a formidable striking partnership with experienced forward Tristan Fraser.

FNQ Bulls

2008 – N/A
Coach – Peter Tokesi
Captain – N/A
Player to Watch – Joe Rusch

Far North Queensland is represented in the league in 2009 with the FNQ Bulls making their inaugural appearance. The club is hoping NSL winning coach Peter Tokesi will be able to get the best out of a group of players largely sourced from the Cairns area.

Logan United FC

2008 – 8th
Coach – Walter Oldenburg
Captain – Robbie Laslo
Player to Watch – Reggie Davani

Logan United had a somewhat disappointing season in 2008 but have made several exciting signings for the new season. The strike force has been bolstered by the signing of prolific PNG International Reggie Davani. Davani will play in front of recent signing and long time friend, Fijian International Raj Oshen. He also joins other recent signing Yochi Okada from Redlands in a re-vamped line up. The coaching staff has also been enhanced with ex Everton, Crewe and Brisbane Strikers keeper Jason Kearton signing on as Goalkeeping Coach

NQ Razorbacks

2008 – 3rd
Coach – Mick Tonner
Captain – Paul Sapelli
Player to Watch – Chris Scuderi

After a successful 2008 season, where the club finished third, coach Mick Tonner is confident that this year's squad will continue to play the attractive football that has gained the Razorbacks a high level of respect from the football community throughout Queensland. Tonner remarked "I am pleased to welcome three players who have been based in Brisbane. Goalkeeper will be Keiran Gonzales who returns to his home base to play for the Razorbacks, whilst Ramone Close has moved from Redlands. Additionally we are very pleased to welcome 17 year old Lorenzo Sipi, who spent his younger days in Townsville, into the squad. He's just done very well in a recent tour of Japan and Korea playing for the Australian schoolboys"

Olympic FC

2008 – 5th
Coach – Bobby Hamilton
Captain – Chris Hagell
Player to Watch – Shane Coffey

Olympic FC will be looking to make the finals this season after missing the cut by five points in 2008. Olympic will once again field a strong attack spearheaded by Shane Coffey and Barry Browett. The side will be looking to take an improved points total from weaker teams this season with coach Bobby Hamilton stating, "It is critical to take points from teams below us on the ladder".

Queensland Academy of Sport

2008 – 6th
Coach – Mike Mulvey
Captain – Michael Angus
Player to Watch – Josh McVey

The QAS squad made a considerable impact on the league in 2008 playing an impressive possession based brand of football despite on many occasions fielding a side with an average of only 16. Opposing sides regularly resorted to physical tactics in an attempt to unsettle the youngsters, however coach Mike Mulvey sees it all as an important part of the players development, "We have some good young talent that will take great benefit from playing in senior football. Tommy Oar is only 16 and he now has a contract with the Queensland Roar, there are others who will make their own mark in the months and years to come".

Redlands City Devils

2008 – 4th
Coach – Peter Bannon
Captain – Ryan Bridge
Player to Watch – Russell Woodruffe

Redlands started strongly last season before fading with injuries taking a toll on a small squad. In response the squad has been strengthened with proven goal scorer Russell Woodruffe brought in from Brisbane Strikers as a star signing. The Devils Rob Jones commented, "We have been interested in Russell for a while, and the time was now right. Russell was looking for a change and new challenges. He is looking forward to the prospect of scoring goals for the talented Redlands outfit".

Sunshine Coast FC

2008 – 1st
Coach – George Cowie
Captain – Ryan Smith
Player to Watch – Shaun Blackman

Sunshine Coast powered their way to the title last season behind both the best attack and defence in the league. The Kawana side will likely be considered favourites after returning with a largely unchanged squad for 2009. League top scorer Shaun Blackman returns to lead the line after terrorising defences with his hold-up skills and powerful heading. Influential young attacking midfielder Tyson Holmes also returns and he will be looking to further progress after becoming a lynchpin of the side in 2008.

Whitsunday Miners

2008 – 9th
Coach – Steve McDowall
Captain – Troy Mundy
Player to Watch – Brett Neeve

2009 is shaping as an exciting season for the Miners with Sea FM on board as a sponsor and a host of new signings bolstering the squad. The Miners have secured the services of Graham Harvey a former Queensland Lions defender, who will bring size and experience to a defence that leaked the most goals in the division in 2008. Also new to the Miners is midfielder Dave Pritchard. Pritchard's ability to attack down either flank will excite the crowds at Harrup Park this season.

By Jarrod Ellis

Photos by Bruce Dinsdale

GET THE BEST FROM THE REST EVERY MONDAY IN GOAL! WEEKLY

MAIDENS BOWL 'EM OVER

Women's National League Makes Its Mark

When Kate McShea, the captain of the inaugural premiership team in the new W-league, raised the premiership trophy to conclude the first season of the new national womens competition it wasn't just the crowd cheering.

For women players, and the entire football community, it seemed that Australia had finally established a successful domestic female football competition. But many questions are being asked about whether this success will last and how to ensure its sustainability.

The Westfield W-league is the national womens football competition run by the Football Federation of Australia's (FFA). It was launched in July 2008 and the ten game season commenced three months later with seven teams linked to an A-league club plus Canberra United.

The Queensland Roar were the eventual winners in the inaugural season defeating Canberra United 2-0 in Brisbane in front of 4,554 fans, a record number for a womens game.

The local team, Melbourne Victory, finishing fifth and just missed the play offs.

The competition was hastily put together and Melbourne Victory W-league coach, Matt Shepherd, said despite only having two months to get his squad together he believed the first season was a success.

"It was thrown together in a very short period of time, with a lot of great support (sic), we had to make it happen and I think it's a good basis to build on," he said.

"It opened up a lot of peoples eyes in terms of what the potential is for the league overall."

Tal Karp, captain of Melbourne Victory W-league, described the competition as the biggest step forward that womens football has seen in Australia.

"While we missed out on the finals we achieved a lot," she said.

"Victoria, in womens soccer (terms), has been the underdog so, to make it to the top five was an achievement."

She said the W-league players were welcomed into the Melbourne Victory club and evidence of this is their inclusion in the team medal night on the 6 March and invitations to attend all the local A-league games.

The competition also raised the profile of the sport with ABC TV broadcasting one match each week.

It was rumoured that the ABC achieved around 125,000 viewers per game and 1.3 million cumulative viewers, which, if true, would make it more watched than the A-league which is only shown on pay television.

ABC TV W-league commentator, Steve Robilliard said getting the women access to good grounds and increasing main stream media interest in the competition would see the quality of the league improve.

Coach of the highly successful Matilda's, Tom Sermmani, was also very impressed by the competition. He told Robbilliard that after ten weeks of tough competition he could see that the skill level and standard of play among some of his national players had improved.

All those interviewed agreed that the major shortcoming of the competition was that the players were not paid in the inaugural season of the W-league.

Recently retired Matilda captain, Cheryl Salisbury, who played for the Newcastle Jets, told SBS TV of the hardship of playing and also having to earn a living outside football.

"The last twelve months have been the hardest for me. To try and work full time, train full time and have free time and try to recover as well. If we want to go forward we have to be professional,' she said.

The teething problems that need to be sorted out next season include a more organised and streamlined approach between the states and the FFA, more media coverage and sponsorship to increase its professionalism.

But the players and coaches are enthusiastic, people are watching the game on TV, womens football participation is growing and with the support all football fans we could be looking at another FFA success story.

By Emma Field

Photo by John Punshon

Melbourne Victory's Brittany Temko (right) intercepts Carys Hawkins (Perth Glory)

GLORY, GLORY MAN UNITED!

But, Which Squad Is Best? 1999 or 2009?

Just recently Paddypower - the Irish bookmakers – paid out to customers who bet on Manchester United winning the league.

Their website explained it thus: "This morning we decided to pay out on Man United to win not just the league, but the FA Cup and Carling Cup as well! Given that no other team in England seems capable of scoring against United, never mind beating them, we just can't see anything other than the domestic treble for the Red Devils this year"

The question of whether Paddypower are right to payout is a separate issue. With United – at the time of writing – still in all four competitions (and having been crowned world champions in Tokyo last year) my question is simple: Right now is this United team better than the team that won the treble in 1999?

My gut feeling is no, though having watched them outplay Inter Milan last week in the UCL (UEFA Champions League) it is hard to argue against them. The squad of 2009 is undoubtedly deeper with players like Anderson, Nani, Scholes, Tevez and Neville being quality substitutes. Don't forget the long-term injury to Owen Hargreaves, who would otherwise have taken Michael Carrick's place. But this article is assessing just the first XI.

This is how the two teams line up side by side. I've picked what I believe to be the strongest XI for both.

1999 TEAM	2009 TEAM
Peter Schmeichel	*Edwin Van Der Sar*
Gary Neville	*Rafael Da Silva*
Denis Irwin	*Patrice Evra*
Jaap Stam	*Rio Ferdinand*
Ronny Johnsen	*Nemanja Vidic*
Ryan Giggs	*Park Ji-Sun*
David Beckham	*Cristiano Ronaldo*
Roy Keane	*Michael Carrick*
Paul Scholes	*Ryan Giggs*
Dwight Yorke	*Wayne Rooney*
Andrew Cole	*Dimitar Berbatov*

The goalkeepers are close. Schmeichel has the edge. He was in his prime back then and was the best in the world. There is no doubt though that their current defence is the best there has been in England since Arsenal's of the 1990's.

The 1999 team had the finest midfield ever assembled in an English team. Giggs, Beckham, Scholes and Keane went to Juventus and beat them after being 2-0 down after 11 minutes. The reason that midfield surpassed all others in England is because of its variety. Giggs - the tricky winger, a conjurer and trickster. Beckham - the deliverer of pinpoint passes and crosses. Keane biting away in central midfield, covering every inch of grass allowing Scholes to make subtle passes and get forward to score crucial goals.

The 2009 midfield doesn't have the same variety. As good an all round player as Cristiano Ronaldo is, when was the last time you saw him beat his man? You may see lots of stepovers but frequently they are no more than showboating in front of defenders.

The attack of Rooney and Berbatov has more technical skill than Yorke and Cole. Yet a strikers currency is goals. Yorke and Cole between them were good for at least 40 league goals a season. Ok, there's no doubt Rooney and Berbatov would have thrived alongside the 1999 midfield but neither player has demonstrated a propensity to be prolific goal scorers.

Overall while the 2009 team are better team defensively, (As evidenced by Van Der Sar's clean sheet record in the league) the midfield of Carrick, Ronaldo, Giggs and the rejuvenated Park Ji-Sun cannot hold a candle to their counterparts from 1999 and furthermore in big away games this season (lost 2-1 at Arsenal, drew 0-0 at Aston Villa, lost 2-1 at Liverpool, at 1-1 with Chelsea, drew 0-0 at Villarreal, drew 1-1 at Celtic, drew at Inter Milan 0-0) they have failed to get results.

So, with the 2009 season reaching the business end, where trophies are handed out, the 1999 team is marginally better. That's the problem though, the season isn't over. If they win all four trophies my arguments become mute. That raises another pivotal question. Will they win all 4 trophies?

Paddy Power has them winning all three on domestic soil which is far from a certainty. Consider there are still 12 league games left and the Red Devils have yet to play Liverpool, Arsenal and Aston Villa, admittedly all at home. Fighting back complacency Sir Alex Ferguson and Paul Scholes declared recently that the title hasn't been won yet. The title isn't over but they are the best team and winning the league looks certain.

Yet Paddy Power's assumptions raise an interesting point. Despite the Irish bookmaker's love fest for United on the home front as I write they start as second favourites behind Barcelona to win the UCL. Leaving aside the three other trophies, it is accepted that the UCL will be United's toughest trophy to win this season.

Therein lays the answer to the question. They will not win all four trophies this season. Not while Barcelona remain in the competition. Fans may argue citing their first leg dominance against Inter and their record 20 game unbeaten run in the UCL but it's unlikely they'll get by an Inter team that will be every bit as resolute defensively as they are. United fans may remember that the team has a habit of tripping up at home, remember Borrusia Dortmund, Real Madrid and Monaco?

Immortality isn't far away though for the team of 2009, starting with the mighty Spurs at Wembley and perhaps ending in Rome. If it comes, I'll have to eat my column!

By Leroy Jerome Robinson
In London

And they partied like it was 1999: The Red Devils create history and give half of Manchester a heart attack after scoring two goals in the dying minutes of the UCL Final against Bayern Munich to sweep all before them.

History never repeats? : The present alumni are potentially on the verge of greatness. With all before them to achieve can the current crop of superstars emulate the feats of their legendary predecessors?

MILOS LUJIC

OAKLEIGH CANNONS FC

goal! Weekly
FOOTBALL FOCUS

Photo by John Punshon

FULL NAME: Milos Lujic
BIRTHPLACE: Australia
BIRTH DATE: 15/02/90
HEIGHT: 192
WEIGHT: 80kgs
MARRIED: Not for a long time
CAR: Mercedes
OCCUPATION OUTSIDE OF FOOTBALL: At the moment a Machine Operator
NICKNAME: Mil, Milzy
PREVIOUS CLUBS: AIS, Melbourne Victory Youth
REPRESENTATIVE HONOURS: U17 Joeys, Under 20 Young Socceroos
CHILDHOOD FOOTBALL HERO: My dad, Zdravko Lujic
FAVOURITE O/S PLAYER: At the moment, Fernando Torres
FAVOURITE VPL CUP PLAYER: Bonel Obradovic, Nikola Roganovic and Billy Damianos when he runs! lol
FAVOURITE FORMER SOCCEROO: Zdravko Lujic
FAVOURITE CURRENT SOCCEROO: Harry Kewell
MOST MEMORABLE MATCH AS A PLAYER: Playing against Argentina last year and against Korea... qualifying for the Under 20 World Cup!
MOST MEMORABLE MATCH AS A FAN: Australia vs Uruguay
MOST MEMORABLE GOAL YOU'VE SCORED: Every goal I've scored for Australia is memorable
EARLIEST FOOTBALL MEMORY: My first goal
FUNNIEST MOMENT IN FOOTBALL: Too many to choose!
BIGGEST DISAPPOINTMENT: Last season's performance for Oakleigh
WORST INJURY: Knee reconstreuction
MOST DIFFICULT OPPONENT: Both Argentinian centre backs, and David Tarka
FAVOURITE AWAY GROUND: Bob Jane
SUPERSTITIONS: None
TYPICAL MATCH DAY MEAL: Pasta
WHAT ARE YOUR STRENGTHS: Holding up the ball, good touch and scoring goals for most teams lol
WHAT ARE YOUR WEAKNESSES: Usually my fitness
FAVOURITE TEAM WHEN GROWING UP: Arsenal
FAVOURITE OTHER SPORTS: Tennis, Boxing, Fishing
FAVOURITE OTHER SPORTSPERSON: Novak Djokovic
FAVOURITE FOODS: Mum's Lasagne
FAVOURITE ACTOR/ACTRESS: Denzel Washington and Brad Pitt
HOBBIES: Going out with mates, Hittin' the gym and fishing
FAVOURITE HOLIDAY RESORT: Serbia and South of France
FAVOURITE NIGHTSPOT: Wheelers and Club Parada
IDEAL DATE: In the back of my car! It's very romantic lol
FAVOURITE TV SHOWS: Entourage
FAVOURITE MUSIC: House and some Rap
FAVOURITE FILM: Casino, Goodfellas
LAST SOCCER SHIRT YOU BOUGHT: Arsenal
FUNNIEST RUMOUR YOU'VE HEARD ABOUT YOURSELF: Too many to choose from!
BIGGEST INFLUENCE ON CAREER: My mum and dad
BIGGEST DRAG IN SOCCER: Pre-season
FOOTBALL AMBITION: To be a professional footballer
WHICH PERSON IN THE WORLD WOULD YOU MOST LIKE TO MEET? Mike Tyson and Diego Maradona
YOUR TIP FOR THIS YEAR'S VPL: I'd have to say Oakleigh to keep Aki happy!

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